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WIN A Columbia® TEN-SPEED FORMULA 10™ RACER!
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X-MEN™
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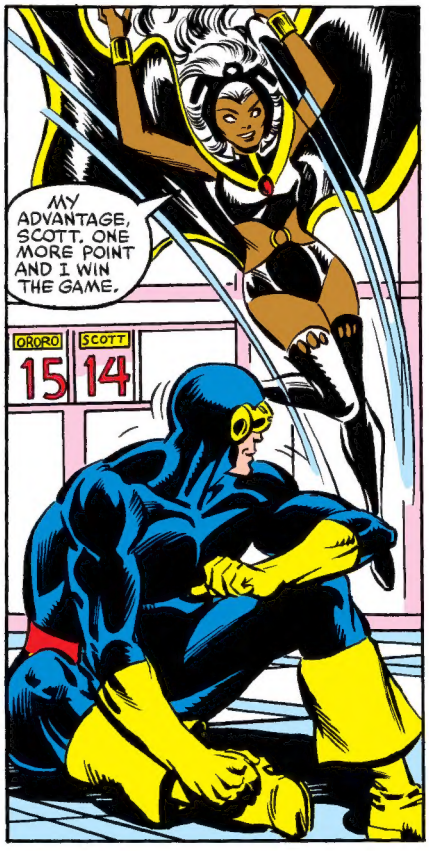
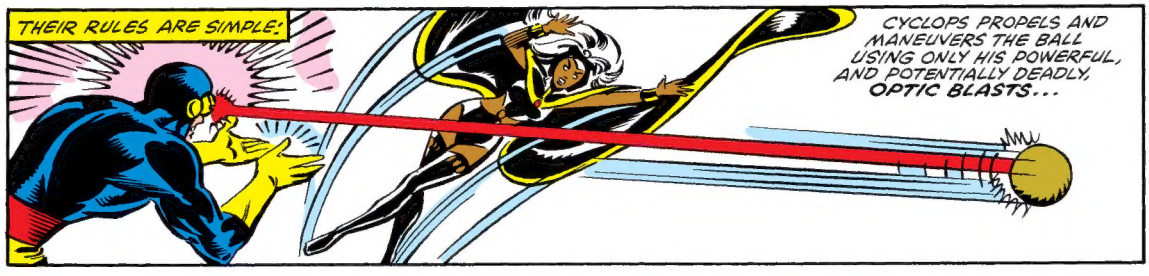
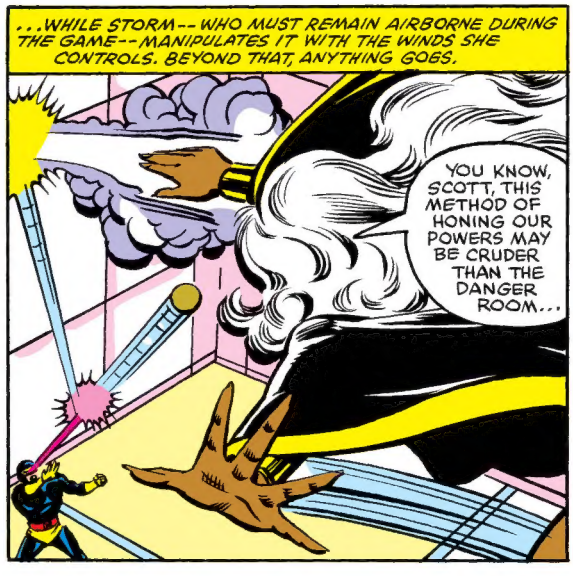

MY ADVANTAGE, SCOTT. ONE MORE POINT AND I WIN THE GAME.
ORORO
SCOTT
15
14

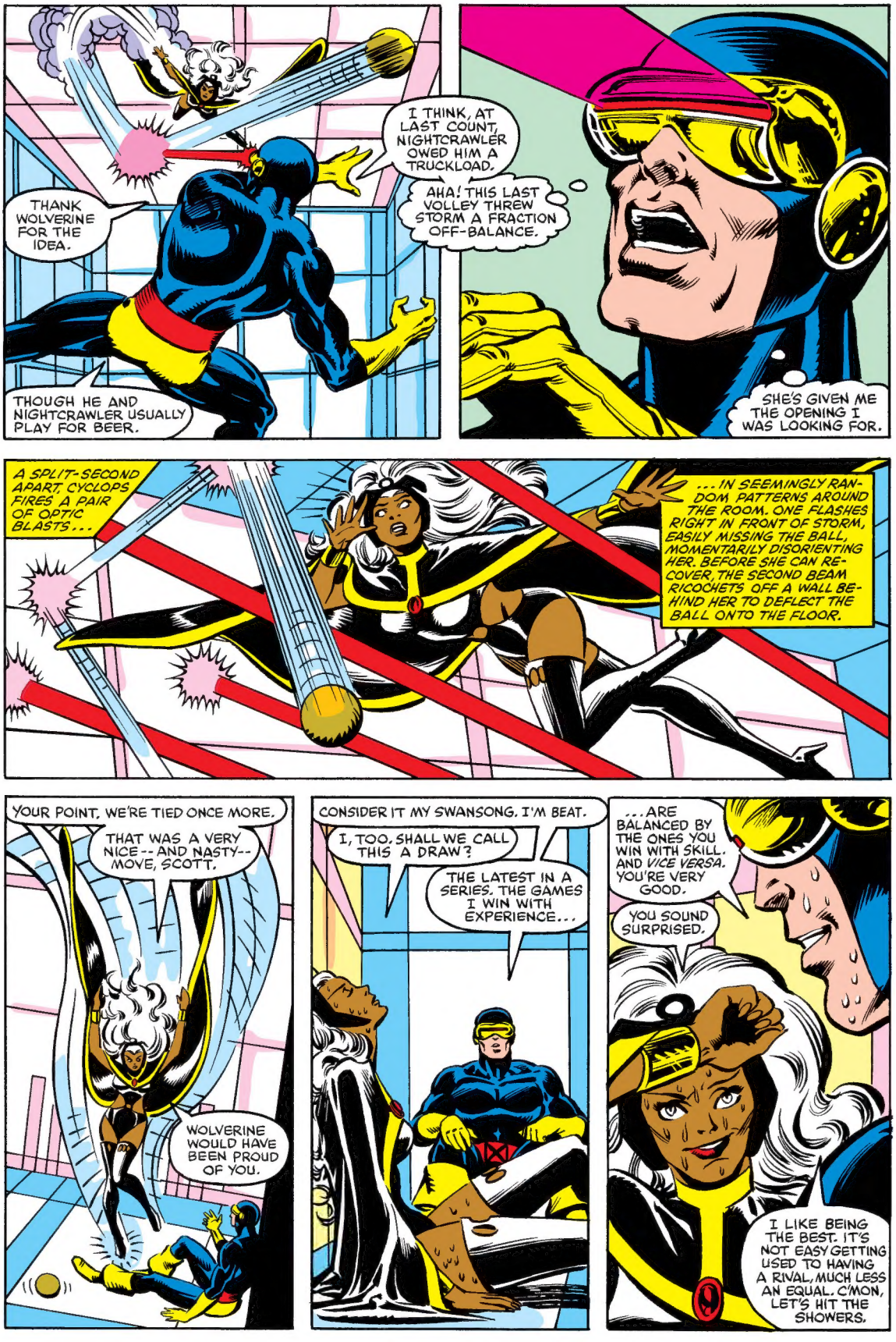
I'LL BELIEVE THAT WHEN I SEE IT, ORORO. SO FAR, NEITHER OF US HAS EVER BEEN MORE THAN A POINT AHEAD OF THE OTHER.
OHHHHH, BROTHER...
TIRED?

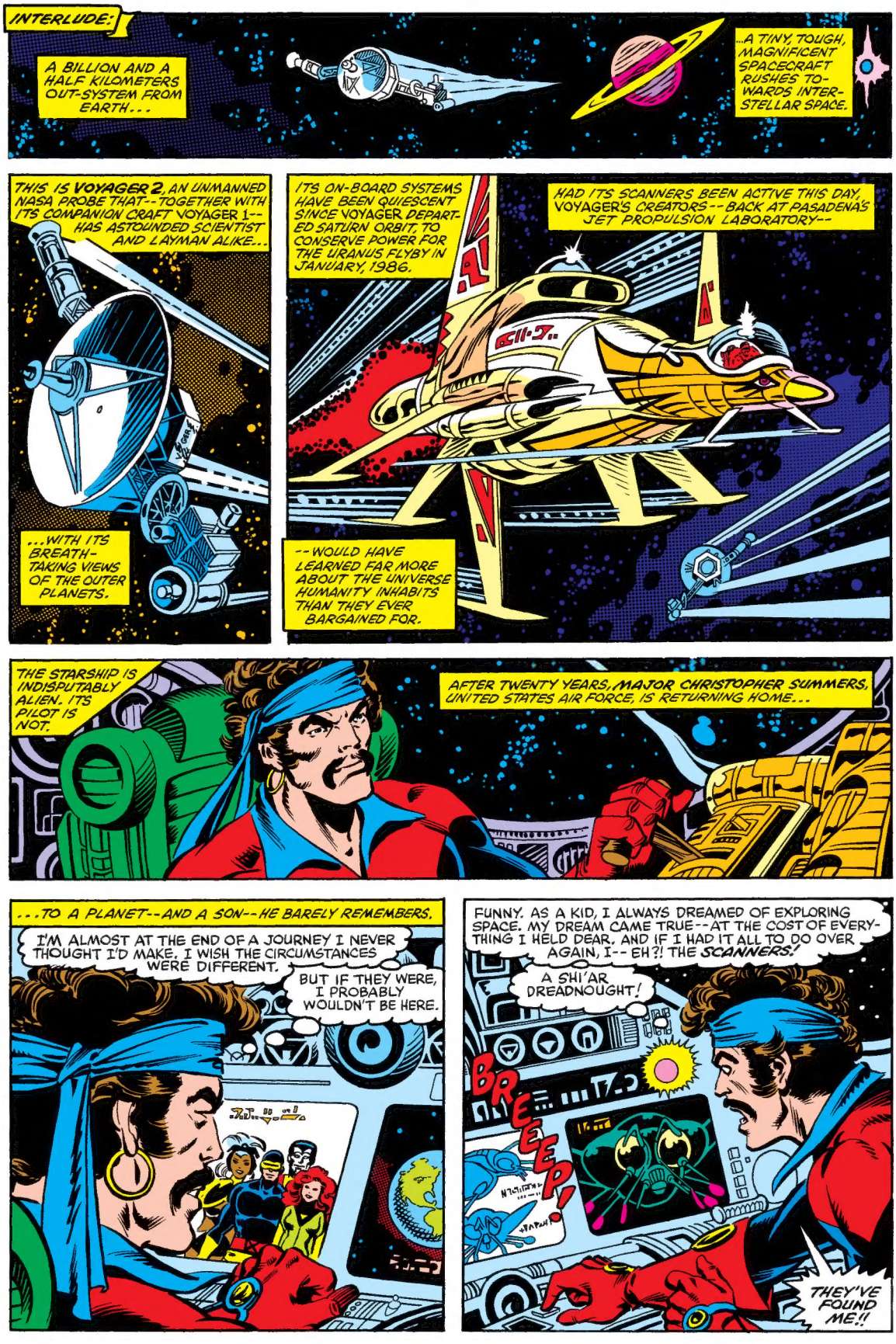
EXHAUSTED. YOU LOOK PRETTY BUSHED YOURSELF.
PLAYING IS HARD WORK. BUT I'VE STILL STRENGTH ENOUGH TO BEAT YOU.
ENOUGH TO TRY, AT ANY RATE.
YOU SERVE, SCOTT.

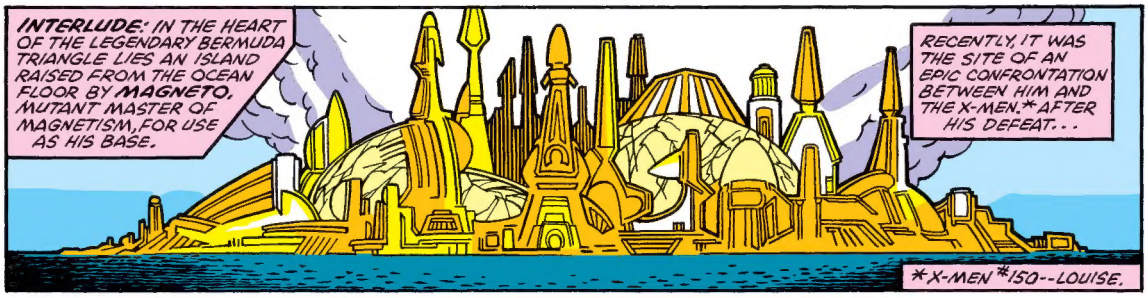

THEIR RULES ARE SIMPLE:
CYCLOPS PROPELS AND MANEUVERS THE BALL USING ONLY HIS POWERFUL, AND POTENTIALLY DEADLY, OPTIC BLASTS...

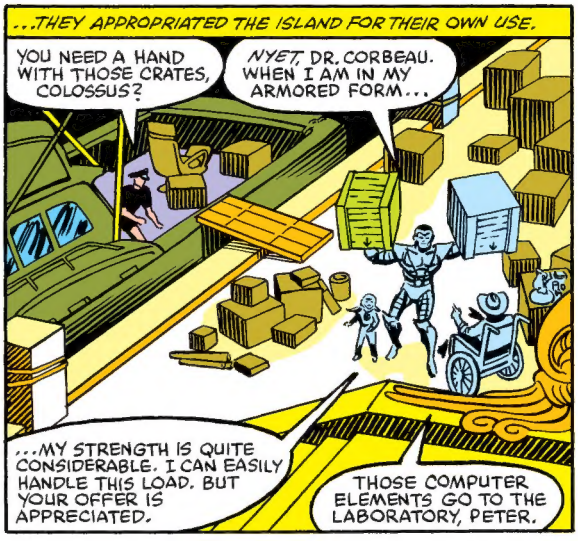

...WHILE STORM--WHO MUST REMAIN AIRBORNE DURING THE GAME--MANIPULATES IT WITH THE WINDS SHE CONTROLS. BEYOND THAT, ANYTHING GOES.
YOU KNOW, SCOTT, THIS METHOD OF HONING OUR POWERS MAY BE CRUDER THAN THE DANGER ROOM...

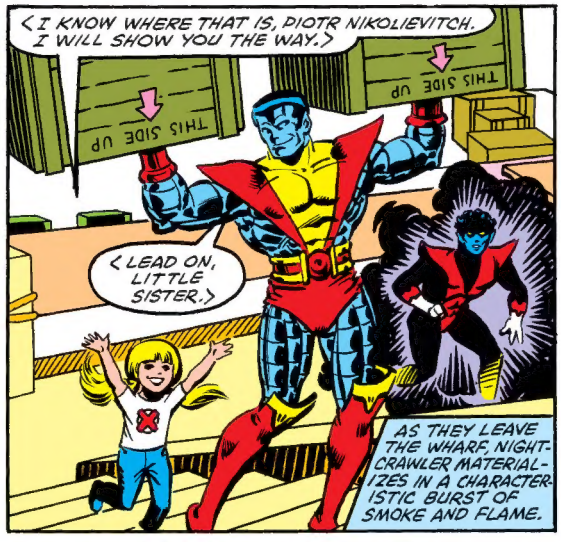
...BUT IT IS ALSO MUCH MORE FUN.

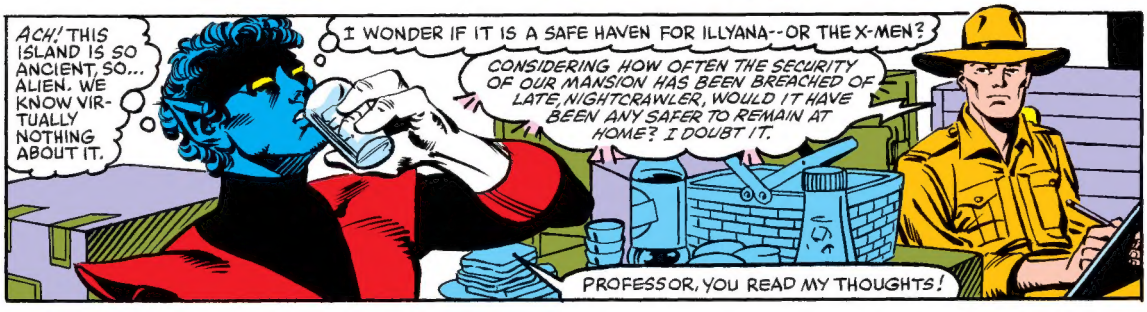

THANK WOLVERINE FOR THE IDEA.
THOUGH HE AND NIGHTCRAWLER USUALLY PLAY FOR BEER.
I THINK, AT LAST COUNT, NIGHTCRAWLER OWED HIM A TRUCKLOAD.
AHA! THIS LAST VOLLEY THREW STORM A FRACTION OFF-BALANCE.
SHE'S GIVEN ME THE OPENING I WAS LOOKING FOR.
A SPLIT-SECOND APART, CYCLOPS FIRES A PAIR OF OPTIC BLASTS...
...IN SEEMINGLY RANDOM PATTERNS AROUND THE ROOM. ONE FLASHES RIGHT IN FRONT OF STORM, EASILY MISSING THE BALL, MOMENTARILY DISORIENTING HER. BEFORE SHE CAN RECOVER, THE SECOND BEAM RICOCHETS OFF A WALL BEHIND HER TO DEFLECT THE BALL ONTO THE FLOOR.
YOUR POINT. WE'RE TIED ONCE MORE.
THAT WAS A VERY NICE -- AND NASTY -- MOVE, SCOTT.
WOLVERINE WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD OF YOU.
CONSIDER IT MY SWANSONG. I'M BEAT.
I, TOO. SHALL WE CALL THIS A DRAW?
THE LATEST IN A SERIES. THE GAMES I WIN WITH EXPERIENCE...
...ARE BALANCED BY THE ONES YOU WIN WITH SKILL. AND *VICE VERSA*. YOU'RE VERY GOOD.
YOU SOUND SURPRISED.
I LIKE BEING THE BEST. IT'S NOT EASY GETTING USED TO HAVING A RIVAL, MUCH LESS AN EQUAL. C'MON, LET'S HIT THE SHOWERS.


INTERLUDE:
A BILLION AND A HALF KILOMETERS OUT-SYSTEM FROM EARTH...
...A TINY, TOUGH, MAGNIFICENT SPACECRAFT RUSHES TOWARDS INTERSTELLAR SPACE.
THIS IS VOYAGER 2, AN UNMANNED NASA PROBE THAT--TOGETHER WITH ITS COMPANION CRAFT VOYAGER 1--HAS ASTOUNDED SCIENTIST AND LAYMAN ALIKE...
...WITH ITS BREATH-TAKING VIEWS OF THE OUTER PLANETS.
ITS ON-BOARD SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN QUIESCENT SINCE VOYAGER DEPARTED SATURN ORBIT, TO CONSERVE POWER FOR THE URANUS FLYBY IN JANUARY, 1986.
HAD ITS SCANNERS BEEN ACTIVE THIS DAY, VOYAGER'S CREATORS--BACK AT PASADENA'S JET PROPULSION LABORATORY--
--WOULD HAVE LEARNED FAR MORE ABOUT THE UNIVERSE HUMANITY INHABITS THAN THEY EVER BARGAINED FOR.
THE STARSHIP IS INDISPUTABLY ALIEN. ITS PILOT IS NOT.
AFTER TWENTY YEARS, MAJOR CHRISTOPHER SUMMERS, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE, IS RETURNING HOME...
...TO A PLANET--AND A SON--HE BARELY REMEMBERS.
I'M ALMOST AT THE END OF A JOURNEY I NEVER THOUGHT I'D MAKE. I WISH THE CIRCUMSTANCES WERE DIFFERENT.
BUT IF THEY WERE, I PROBABLY WOULDN'T BE HERE.
FUNNY. AS A KID, I ALWAYS DREAMED OF EXPLORING SPACE. MY DREAM CAME TRUE--AT THE COST OF EVERYTHING I HELD DEAR, AND IF I HAD IT ALL TO DO OVER AGAIN, I--EH?! THE SCANNERS!
A SHI'AR DREADNOUGHT!
BREEEEP!
THEY'VE FOUND ME!!

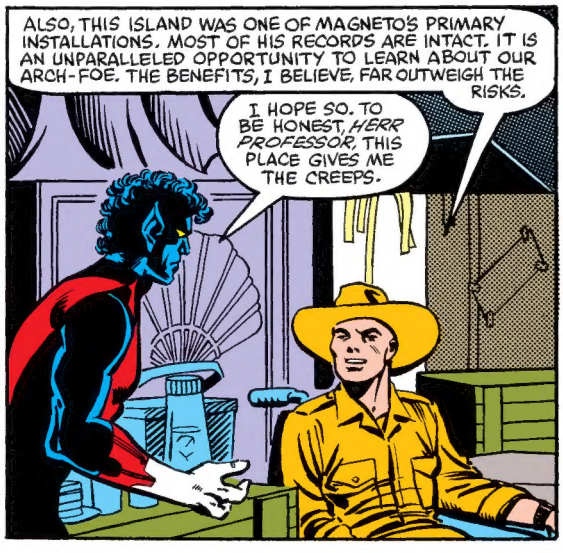

INTERLUDE: IN THE HEART OF THE LEGENDARY BERMUDA TRIANGLE LIES AN ISLAND RAISED FROM THE OCEAN FLOOR BY MAGNETO, MUTANT MASTER OF MAGNETISM, FOR USE AS HIS BASE.
RECENTLY, IT WAS THE SITE OF AN EPIC CONFRONTATION BETWEEN HIM AND THE X-MEN.* AFTER HIS DEFEAT...
*X-MEN #150--LOUISE.

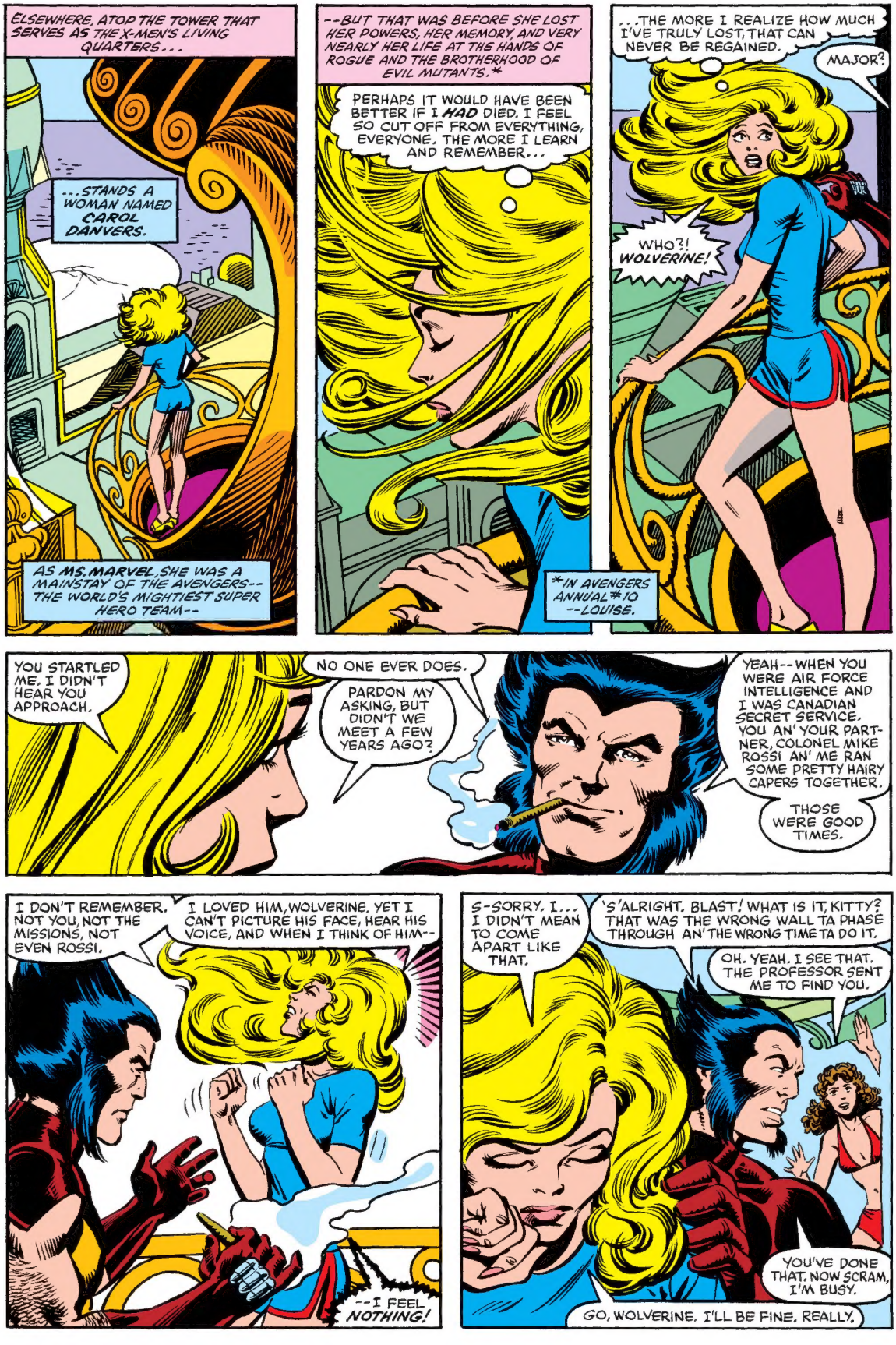

...THEY APPROPRIATED THE ISLAND FOR THEIR OWN USE.
YOU NEED A HAND WITH THOSE CRATES, COLOSSUS?
NYET, DR. CORBEAU. WHEN I AM IN MY ARMORED FORM...
...MY STRENGTH IS QUITE CONSIDERABLE. I CAN EASILY HANDLE THIS LOAD. BUT YOUR OFFER IS APPRECIATED.
THOSE COMPUTER ELEMENTS GO TO THE LABORATORY, PETER.

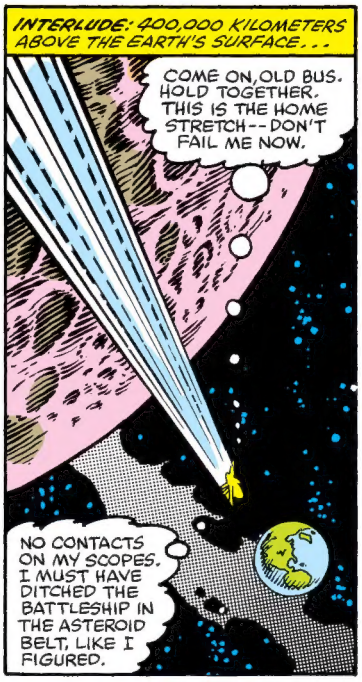

<I KNOW WHERE THAT IS, PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH. I WILL SHOW YOU THE WAY.>
THIS SIDE UP
THIS SIDE UP
<LEAD ON, LITTLE SISTER.>
AS THEY LEAVE THE WHARF, NIGHTCRAWLER MATERIALIZES IN A CHARACTERISTIC BURST OF SMOKE AND FLAME.

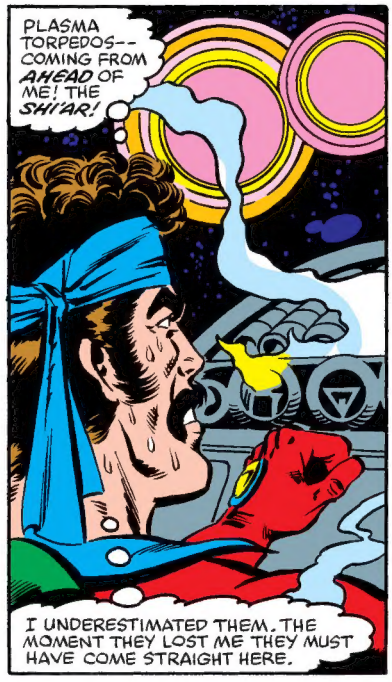

ACH! THIS ISLAND IS SO ANCIENT, SO... ALIEN. WE KNOW VIRTUALLY NOTHING ABOUT IT.
I WONDER IF IT IS A SAFE HAVEN FOR ILLYANA--OR THE X-MEN?
CONSIDERING HOW OFTEN THE SECURITY OF OUR MANSION HAS BEEN BREACHED OF LATE, NIGHTCRAWLER, WOULD IT HAVE BEEN ANY SAFER TO REMAIN AT HOME? I DOUBT IT.
PROFESSOR, YOU READ MY THOUGHTS!

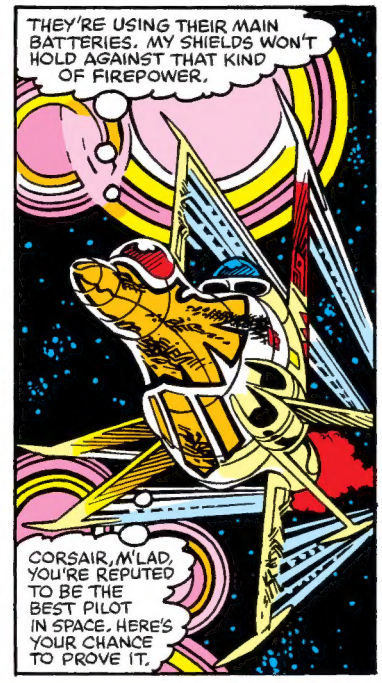
I APOLOGIZE, KURT. BUT THEY WERE SO OBVIOUS, AND SO STRONG, I COULDN'T HELP IT. YOU KNOW THERE'S A GROWING ANTI-MUTANT SENTIMENT IN THE STATES.
I FEAR-- FROM WHAT I'VE LEARNED RECENTLY-- THAT IT MAY HAVE OFFICIAL SANCTION. FOR THE MOMENT IT IS SIMPLY TOO DANGEROUS TO REMAIN IN WESTCHESTER.

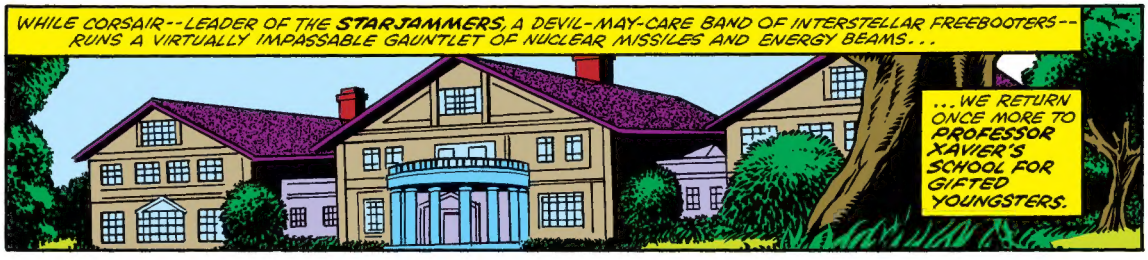

ALSO, THIS ISLAND WAS ONE OF MAGNETO'S PRIMARY INSTALLATIONS. MOST OF HIS RECORDS ARE INTACT. IT IS AN UNPARALLELED OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT OUR ARCH-FOE. THE BENEFITS, I BELIEVE, FAR OUTWEIGH THE RISKS.
I HOPE SO. TO BE HONEST, HERR PROFESSOR, THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS.

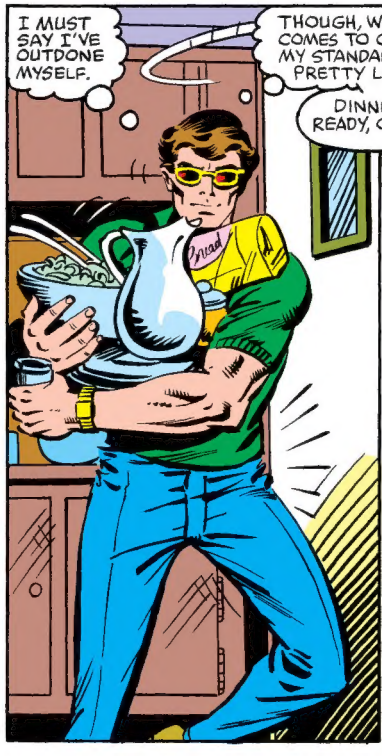

ELSEWHERE, ATOP THE TOWER THAT SERVES AS THE X-MEN'S LIVING QUARTERS...
...STANDS A WOMAN NAMED CAROL DANVERS.
AS MS. MARVEL, SHE WAS A MAINSTAY OF THE AVENGERS--THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST SUPER HERO TEAM--
--BUT THAT WAS BEFORE SHE LOST HER POWERS, HER MEMORY, AND VERY NEARLY HER LIFE AT THE HANDS OF ROGUE AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS.*
PERHAPS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF I HAD DIED. I FEEL SO CUT OFF FROM EVERYTHING, EVERYONE. THE MORE I LEARN AND REMEMBER...
*IN AVENGERS ANNUAL #10 --LOUISE.
...THE MORE I REALIZE HOW MUCH I'VE TRULY LOST, THAT CAN NEVER BE REGAINED.
MAJOR?
WHO?! WOLVERINE!
YOU STARTLED ME. I DIDN'T HEAR YOU APPROACH.
NO ONE EVER DOES.
PARDON MY ASKING, BUT DIDN'T WE MEET A FEW YEARS AGO?
YEAH--WHEN YOU WERE AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE AND I WAS CANADIAN SECRET SERVICE. YOU AN' YOUR PARTNER, COLONEL MIKE ROSSI AN' ME RAN SOME PRETTY HAIRY CAPERS TOGETHER.
THOSE WERE GOOD TIMES.
I DON'T REMEMBER. NOT YOU, NOT THE MISSIONS, NOT EVEN ROSSI.
I LOVED HIM, WOLVERINE. YET I CAN'T PICTURE HIS FACE, HEAR HIS VOICE, AND WHEN I THINK OF HIM--
--I FEEL NOTHING!
S-SORRY. I... I DIDN'T MEAN TO COME APART LIKE THAT.
'S'ALRIGHT. BLAST! WHAT IS IT, KITTY? THAT WAS THE WRONG WALL TA PHASE THROUGH AN' THE WRONG TIME TA DO IT.
OH. YEAH. I SEE THAT. THE PROFESSOR SENT ME TO FIND YOU.
YOU'VE DONE THAT. NOW SCRAM, I'M BUSY.
GO, WOLVERINE. I'LL BE FINE. REALLY.


INTERLUDE: 400,000 KILOMETERS ABOVE THE EARTH'S SURFACE...
COME ON, OLD BUS. HOLD TOGETHER. THIS IS THE HOME STRETCH--DON'T FAIL ME NOW.
NO CONTACTS ON MY SCOPES. I MUST HAVE DITCHED THE BATTLESHIP IN THE ASTEROID BELT, LIKE I FIGURED.

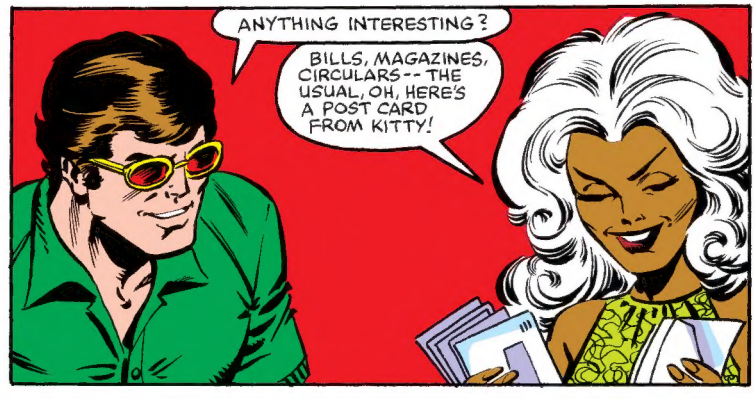

PLASMA TORPEDOS--COMING FROM AHEAD OF ME! THE SHI'AR!
I UNDERESTIMATED THEM. THE MOMENT THEY LOST ME THEY MUST HAVE COME STRAIGHT HERE.

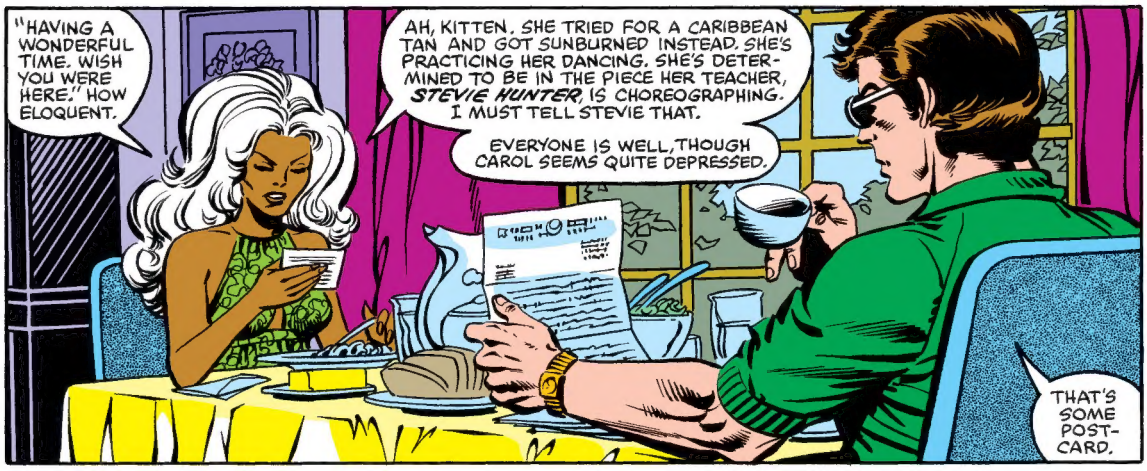

THEY'RE USING THEIR MAIN BATTERIES. MY SHIELDS WON'T HOLD AGAINST THAT KIND OF FIREPOWER.
CORSAIR, M'LAD, YOU'RE REPUTED TO BE THE BEST PILOT IN SPACE. HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO PROVE IT.


WHILE CORSAIR--LEADER OF THE STARJAMMERS, A DEVIL-MAY-CARE BAND OF INTERSTELLAR FREEBOOTERS--RUNS A VIRTUALLY IMPASSABLE GAUNTLET OF NUCLEAR MISSILES AND ENERGY BEAMS...
...WE RETURN ONCE MORE TO PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.


I MUST SAY I'VE OUTDONE MYSELF.
THOUGH, WHEN IT COMES TO COOKING, MY STANDARDS ARE PRETTY LOW.
DINNER'S READY, ORORO.

I HAVE THE MAIL, SCOTT.


ANYTHING INTERESTING?
BILLS, MAGAZINES, CIRCULARS--THE USUAL, OH, HERE'S A POST CARD FROM KITTY!


"HAVING A WONDERFUL TIME. WISH YOU WERE HERE." HOW ELOQUENT.
AH, KITTEN. SHE TRIED FOR A CARIBBEAN TAN AND GOT SUNBURNED INSTEAD. SHE'S PRACTICING HER DANCING. SHE'S DETERMINED TO BE IN THE PIECE HER TEACHER, STEVIE HUNTER, IS CHOREOGRAPHING. I MUST TELL STEVIE THAT.
EVERYONE IS WELL, THOUGH CAROL SEEMS QUITE DEPRESSED.
THAT'S SOME POST-CARD.

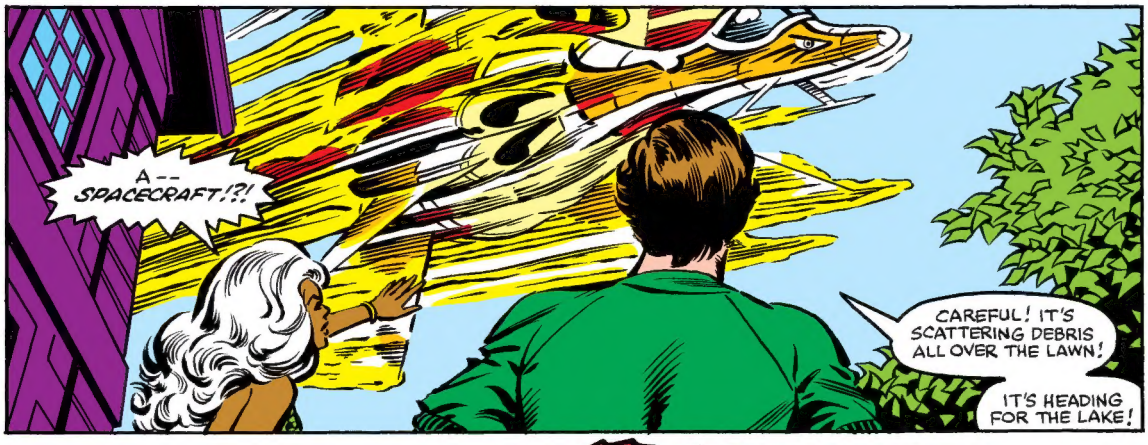
KITTY WRITES VERY SMALL. WHAT IS THAT?
A LETTER FROM EMMA FROST'S MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY, OFFICIALLY REVOKING KITTY'S ADMISSION. THE WHITE QUEEN WAS AS GOOD AS HER WORD.*
IT'S TOO LATE IN THE TERM--IT WOULD BE TOO DISRUPTIVE--FOR KITTY'S PARENTS TO TRANSFER HER ANYWHERE ELSE, SO XAVIER'S SCHOOL HAS HER FOR ONE MORE YEAR AT LEAST.
*SEE X-MEN #152--L.

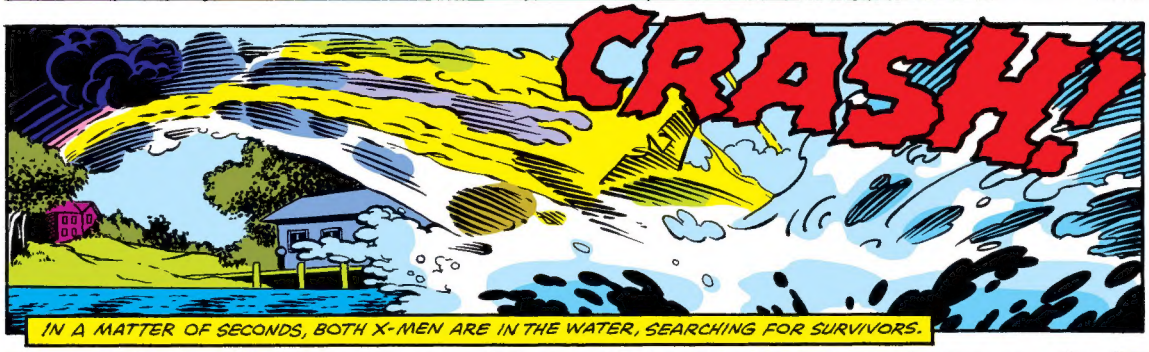
YOU UNDER-RATE YOURSELF. THIS IS ALL QUITE DELICIOUS.
THANKS.
SCOTT, YOU CALLED ME YOUR "RIVAL" EARLIER. AM I? DO YOU WISH TO RECLAIM YOUR OLD POSITION AS TEAM LEADER?
DO YOU WISH TO GIVE IT UP?

I...AM NOT CERTAIN. I TOOK IT RELUCTANTLY. THE RESPONSIBILITY... FRIGHTENED ME.
BUT OVER THE MONTHS...

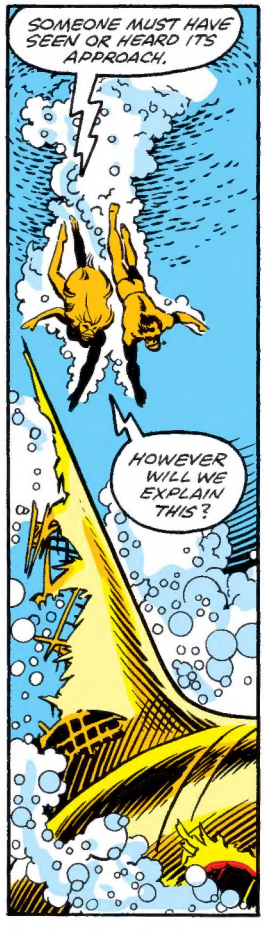
...I HAVE GROWN TO ACCEPT IT. I AM GOOD AT IT--THOUGH I CONCEDE YOU ARE THE BEST.
AGAIN, THANKS. BUT TO BE HONEST, I'M NOT SURE I WANT THE JOB BACK.

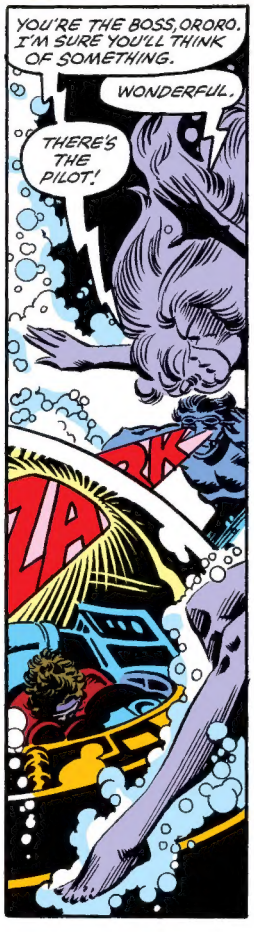
SO MUCH HAS CHANGED, IS CHANGING, IN MY LIFE. I FEEL LIKE I'M AT A CROSSROADS--
GOOD LORD!
THAT ROARING SOUND--!
WHAT THE BLAZES IS HAPPENING?!?

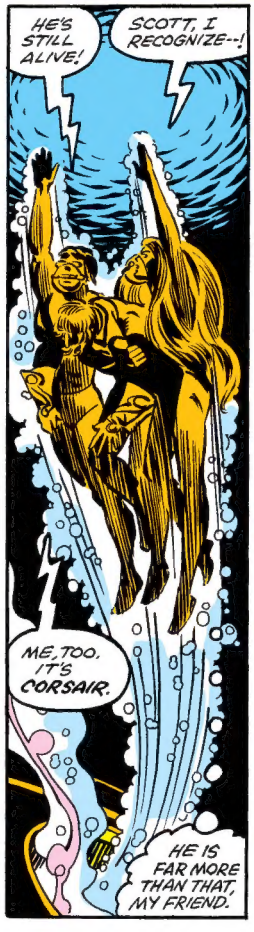


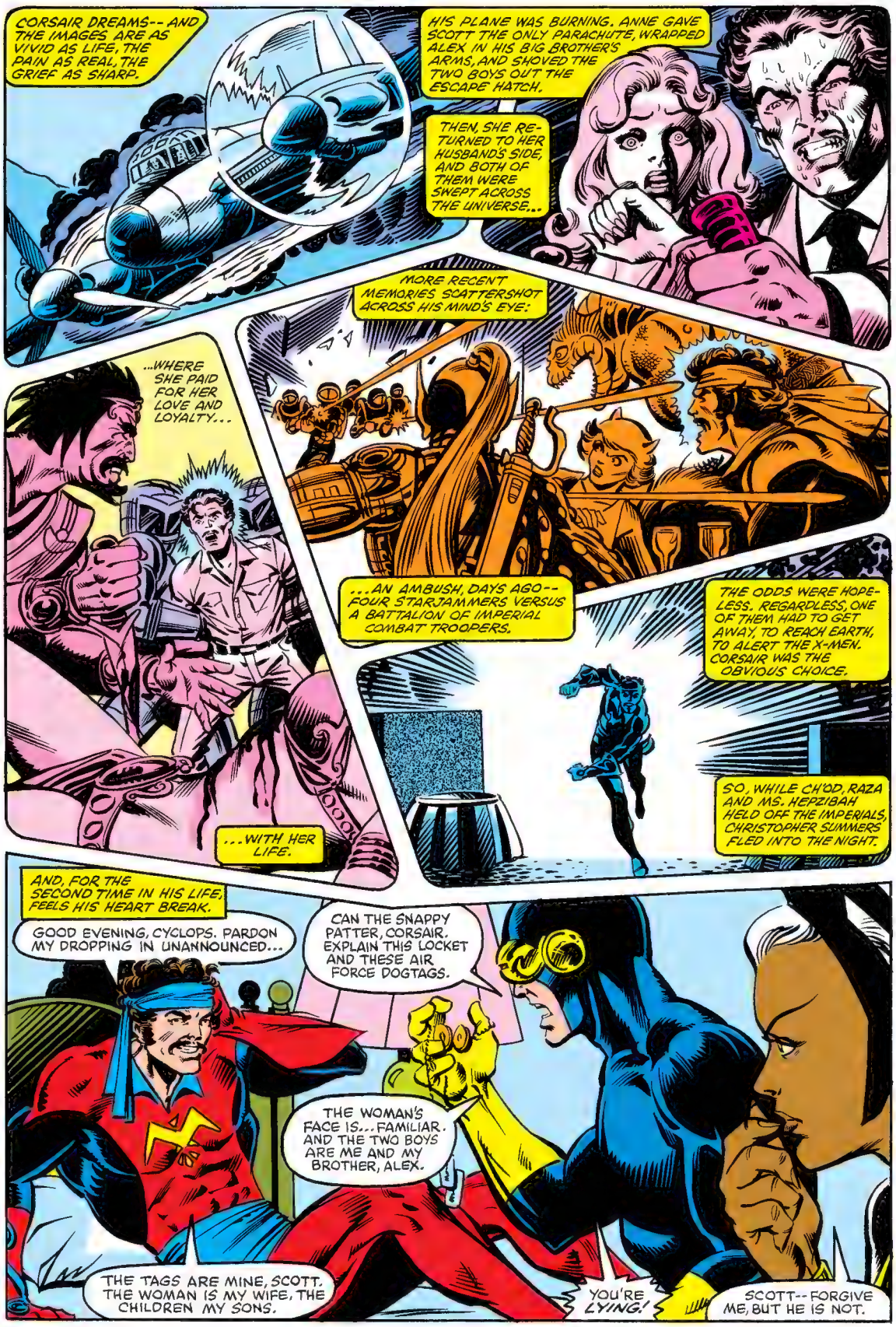


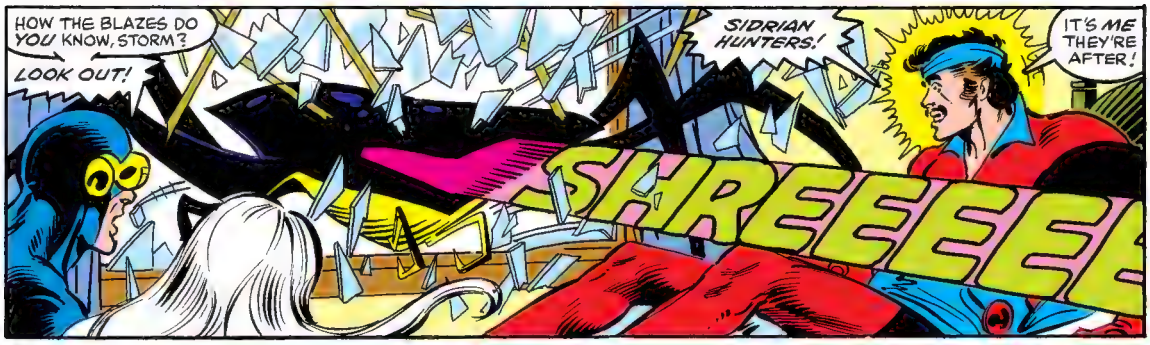
IN A MATTER OF SECONDS, BOTH X-MEN ARE IN THE WATER, SEARCHING FOR SURVIVORS.







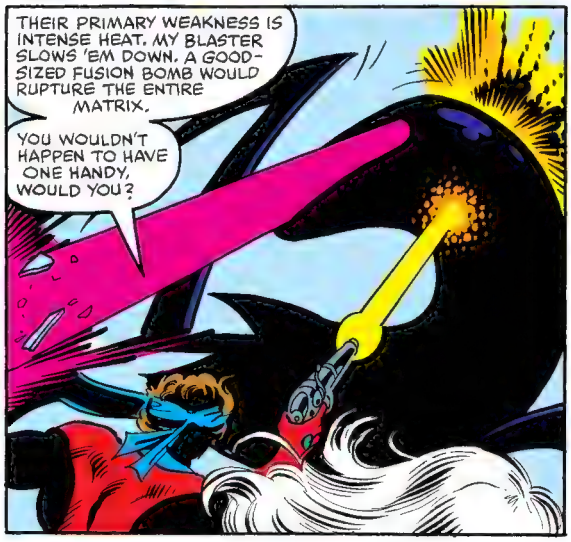

CORSAIR DREAMS-- AND THE IMAGES ARE AS VIVID AS LIFE, THE PAIN AS REAL, THE GRIEF AS SHARP.
HIS PLANE WAS BURNING. ANNE GAVE SCOTT THE ONLY PARACHUTE, WRAPPED ALEX IN HIS BIG BROTHER'S ARMS, AND SHOVED THE TWO BOYS OUT THE ESCAPE HATCH.
THEN, SHE RETURNED TO HER HUSBAND'S SIDE, AND BOTH OF THEM WERE SWEPT ACROSS THE UNIVERSE...
MORE RECENT MEMORIES SCATTERSHOT ACROSS HIS MIND'S EYE:
...WHERE SHE PAID FOR HER LOVE AND LOYALTY...
...AN AMBUSH, DAYS AGO-- FOUR STARJAMMERS VERSUS A BATTALION OF IMPERIAL COMBAT TROOPERS.
THE ODDS WERE HOPELESS. REGARDLESS, ONE OF THEM HAD TO GET AWAY, TO REACH EARTH, TO ALERT THE X-MEN. CORSAIR WAS THE OBVIOUS CHOICE.
...WITH HER LIFE.
SO, WHILE CH'OD, RAZA AND MS. HEPZIBAH HELD OFF THE IMPERIALS, CHRISTOPHER SUMMERS FLED INTO THE NIGHT.
AND, FOR THE SECOND TIME IN HIS LIFE, FEELS HIS HEART BREAK.
GOOD EVENING, CYCLOPS. PARDON MY DROPPING IN UNANNOUNCED...
CAN THE SNAPPY PATTER, CORSAIR. EXPLAIN THIS LOCKET AND THESE AIR FORCE DOGTAGS.
THE WOMAN'S FACE IS... FAMILIAR. AND THE TWO BOYS ARE ME AND MY BROTHER, ALEX.
THE TAGS ARE MINE, SCOTT. THE WOMAN IS MY WIFE, THE CHILDREN MY SONS.
YOU'RE LYING!
SCOTT-- FORGIVE ME, BUT HE IS NOT.

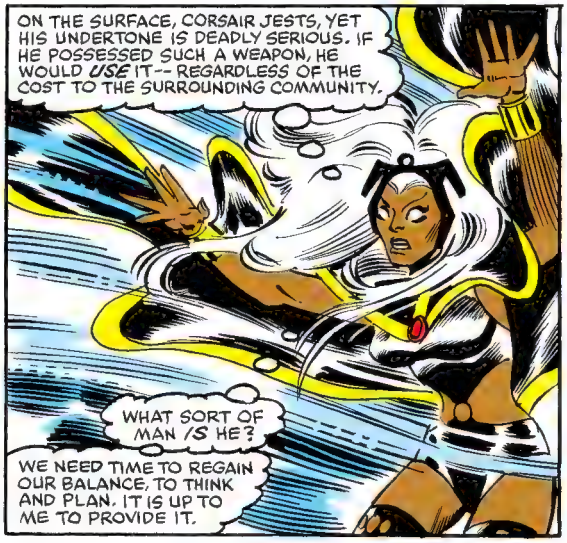

HOW THE BLAZES DO YOU KNOW, STORM?
LOOK OUT!
SIDRIAN HUNTERS!
IT'S ME THEY'RE AFTER!
SHREEEEE

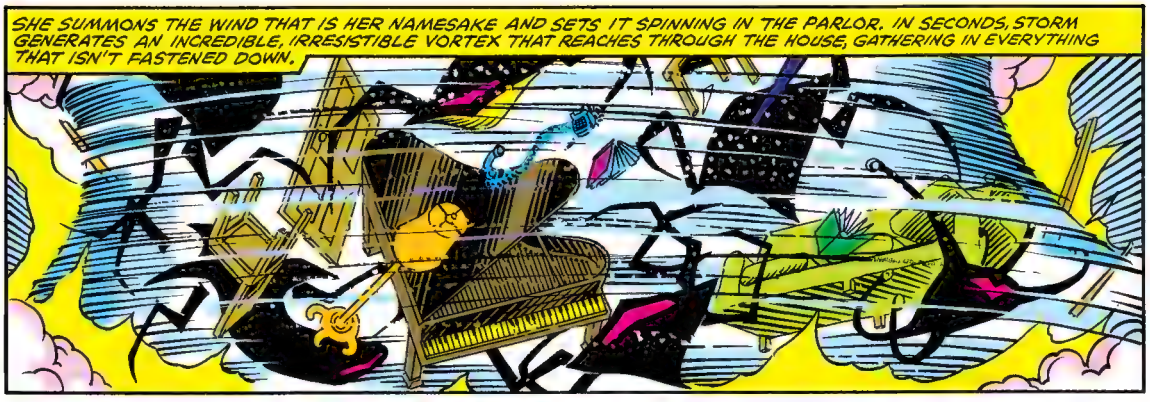
THEY'LL HAVE TO WAIT THEIR TURN.
UNTIL I GET SOME ANSWERS, CORSAIR, YOU'RE MINE!

SUITS ME. BUT WE CAN'T STAY HERE.
WE NEED ROOM TO MANEUVER!
FOLLOW ME DOWNSTAIRS!

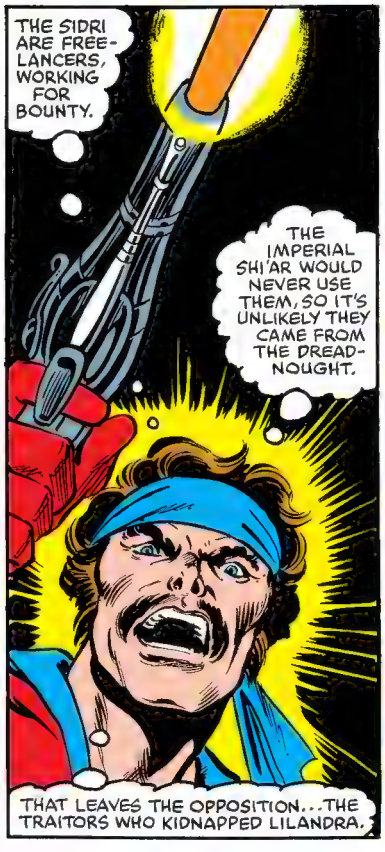
MORE OF THEM, CYCLOPS!
THEY'RE POURING THROUGH EVERY WINDOW IN THE HOUSE. YOU SEEM TO KNOW THESE HORRORS, CORSAIR -- HOW DO WE FIGHT THEM?

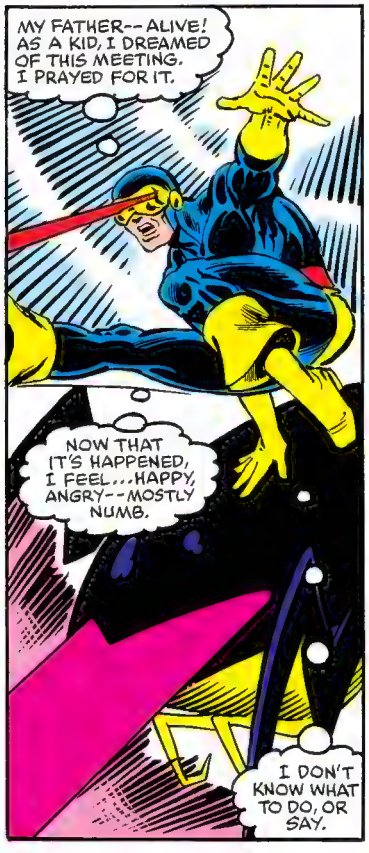

THEIR PRIMARY WEAKNESS IS INTENSE HEAT. MY BLASTER SLOWS 'EM DOWN. A GOOD-SIZED FUSION BOMB WOULD RUPTURE THE ENTIRE MATRIX.
YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO HAVE ONE HANDY, WOULD YOU?

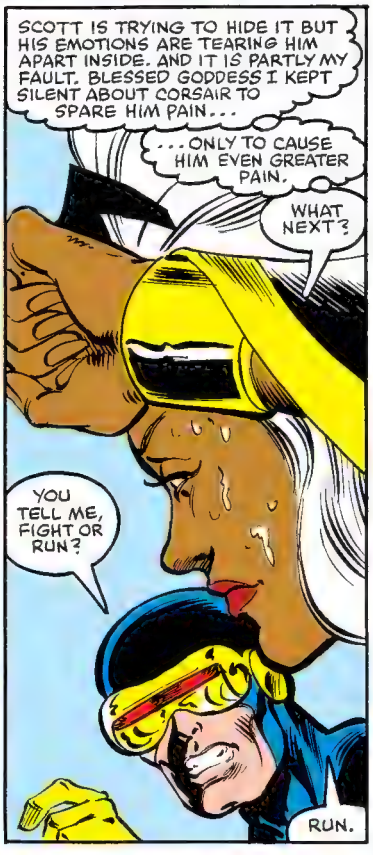

ON THE SURFACE, CORSAIR JESTS, YET HIS UNDERTONE IS DEADLY SERIOUS. IF HE POSSESSED SUCH A WEAPON, HE WOULD USE IT -- REGARDLESS OF THE COST TO THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY.
WHAT SORT OF MAN IS HE?
WE NEED TIME TO REGAIN OUR BALANCE, TO THINK AND PLAN. IT IS UP TO ME TO PROVIDE IT.


SHE SUMMONS THE WIND THAT IS HER NAMESAKE AND SETS IT SPINNING IN THE PARLOR. IN SECONDS, STORM GENERATES AN INCREDIBLE, IRRESISTIBLE VORTEX THAT REACHES THROUGH THE HOUSE, GATHERING IN EVERYTHING THAT ISN'T FASTENED DOWN.

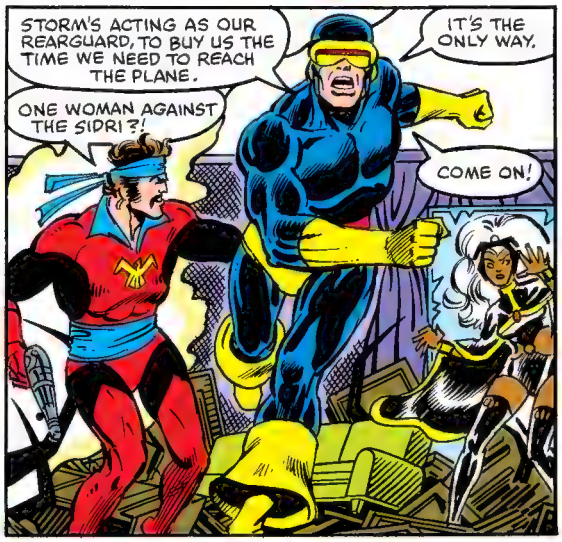
THE FURNITURE DOES NOT SURVIVE. OUR HEROES, PROTECTED BY STORM FROM HER CREATION, DO.
REGRETTABLY, SO ALSO DO THEIR FOES.

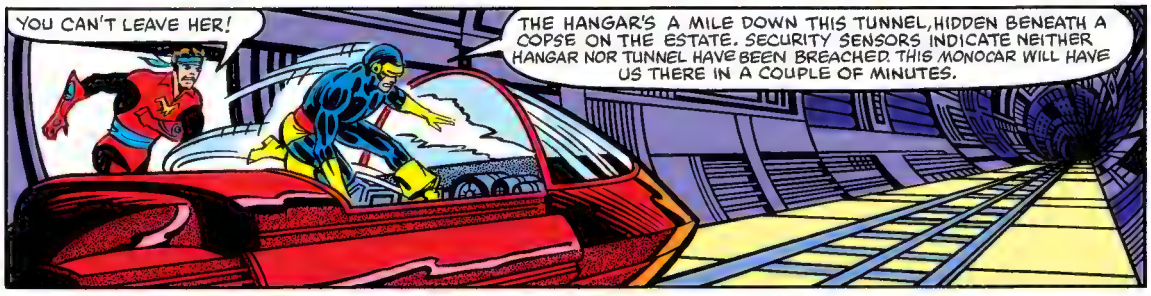

THE SIDRI ARE FREE-LANCERS, WORKING FOR BOUNTY.
THE IMPERIAL SHI'AR WOULD NEVER USE THEM, SO IT'S UNLIKELY THEY CAME FROM THE DREAD-NOUGHT.
THAT LEAVES THE OPPOSITION...THE TRAITORS WHO KIDNAPPED LILANDRA.

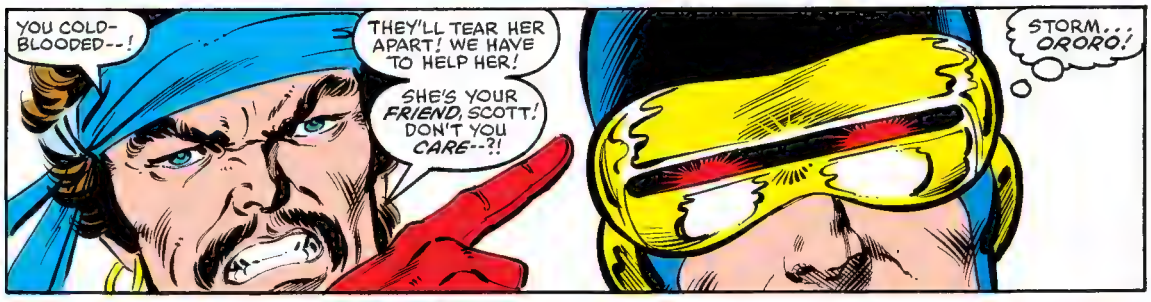

MY FATHER--ALIVE! AS A KID, I DREAMED OF THIS MEETING. I PRAYED FOR IT.
NOW THAT IT'S HAPPENED, I FEEL...HAPPY, ANGRY--MOSTLY NUMB.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, OR SAY.


SCOTT IS TRYING TO HIDE IT BUT HIS EMOTIONS ARE TEARING HIM APART INSIDE. AND IT IS PARTLY MY FAULT. BLESSED GODDESS I KEPT SILENT ABOUT CORSAIR TO SPARE HIM PAIN...
...ONLY TO CAUSE HIM EVEN GREATER PAIN.
WHAT NEXT?
YOU TELL ME, FIGHT OR RUN?
RUN.

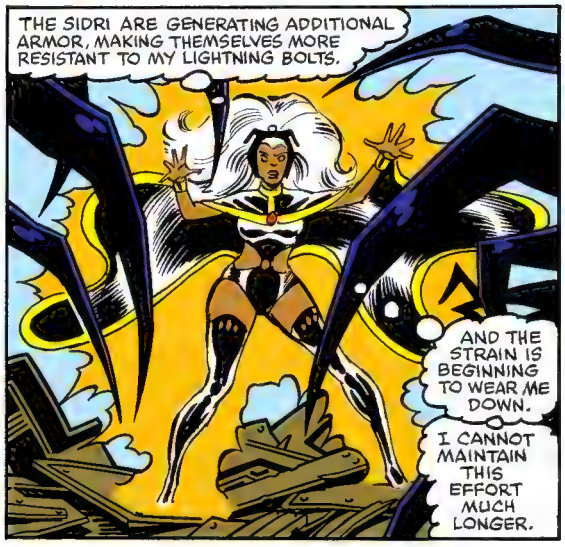
WE NEED THE OTHER X-MEN AND WE MUST DRAW THESE MONSTERS AWAY BEFORE INNOCENT CIVILIANS BECOME INVOLVED.
WE'LL USE THE BLACKBIRD. I'LL CALL YOU OVER OUR MICRO-TRANSCEIVERS WHEN WE'RE READY TO LIFT-OFF.
AND I SHALL COME.
IF I AM ABLE.
WHAT'S SHE TALKING ABOUT?!

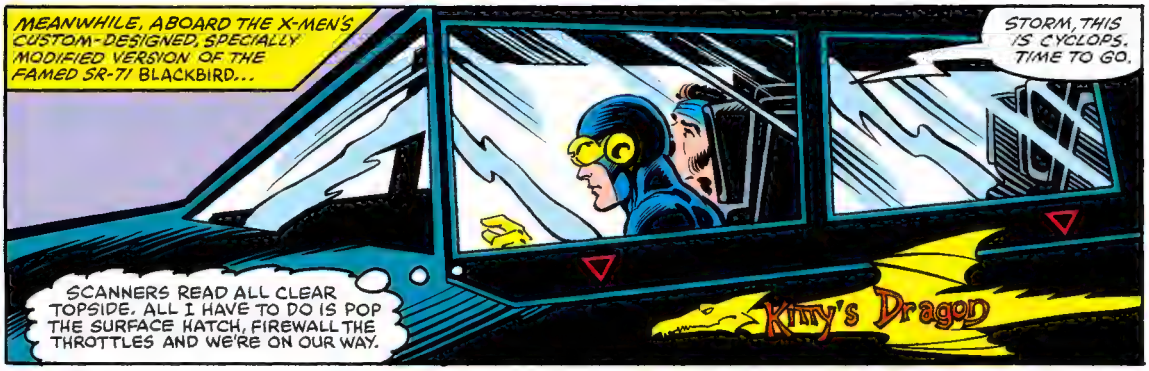

STORM'S ACTING AS OUR REARGUARD, TO BUY US THE TIME WE NEED TO REACH THE PLANE.
IT'S THE ONLY WAY.
ONE WOMAN AGAINST THE SIDRI?!
COME ON!


YOU CAN'T LEAVE HER!
THE HANGAR'S A MILE DOWN THIS TUNNEL, HIDDEN BENEATH A COPSE ON THE ESTATE. SECURITY SENSORS INDICATE NEITHER HANGAR NOR TUNNEL HAVE BEEN BREACHED. THIS MONOCAR WILL HAVE US THERE IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES.

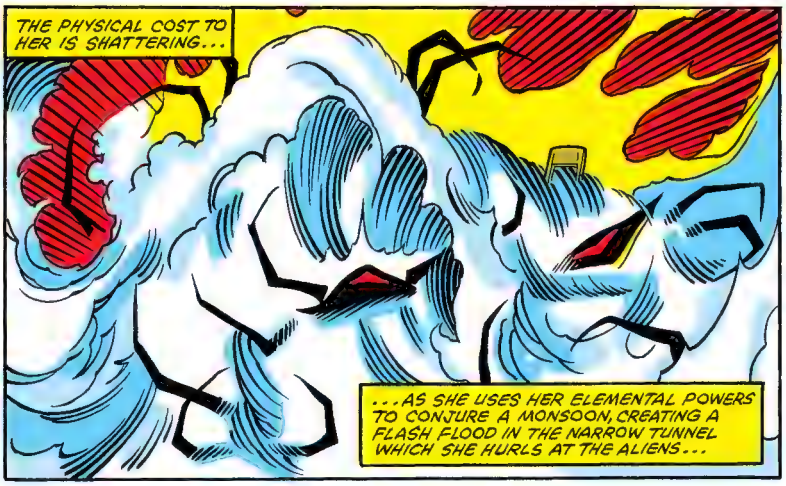

YOU COLD-BLOODED--!
THEY'LL TEAR HER APART! WE HAVE TO HELP HER!
SHE'S YOUR FRIEND, SCOTT! DON'T YOU CARE--?!
STORM... ORORO!

YES!!
BUT I'LL LEAVE HER JUST THE SAME...
...AS I'D EXPECT HER TO LEAVE ME.

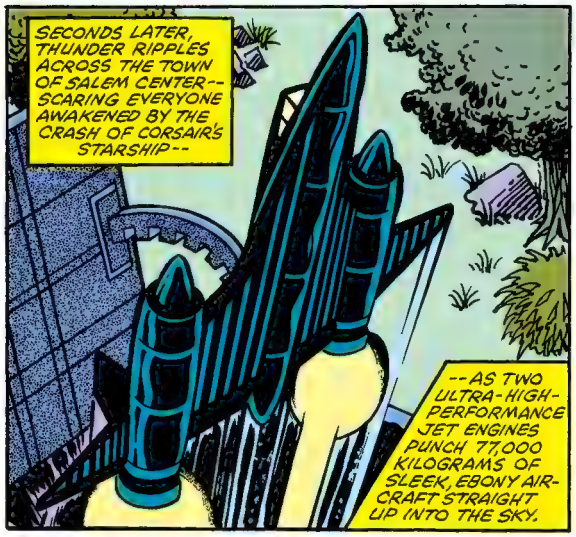

THE SIDRI ARE GENERATING ADDITIONAL ARMOR, MAKING THEMSELVES MORE RESISTANT TO MY LIGHTNING BOLTS.
AND THE STRAIN IS BEGINNING TO WEAR ME DOWN.
I CANNOT MAINTAIN THIS EFFORT MUCH LONGER.

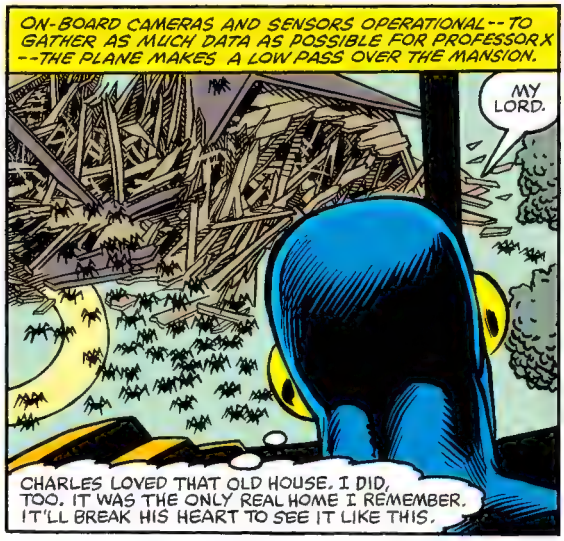

MEANWHILE, ABOARD THE X-MEN'S CUSTOM-DESIGNED, SPECIALLY MODIFIED VERSION OF THE FAMED SR-71 BLACKBIRD...
STORM, THIS IS CYCLOPS. TIME TO GO.
SCANNERS READ ALL CLEAR TOPSIDE. ALL I HAVE TO DO IS POP THE SURFACE HATCH, FIREWALL THE THROTTLES AND WE'RE ON OUR WAY.
Kitty's Dragon

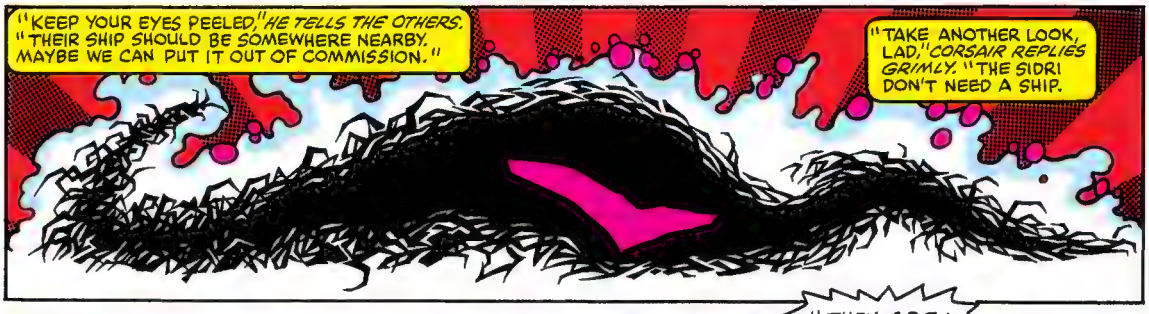
AND NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON.
I HAVEN'T TRIED THIS MANEUVER IN AGES. I HOPE IT WORKS.

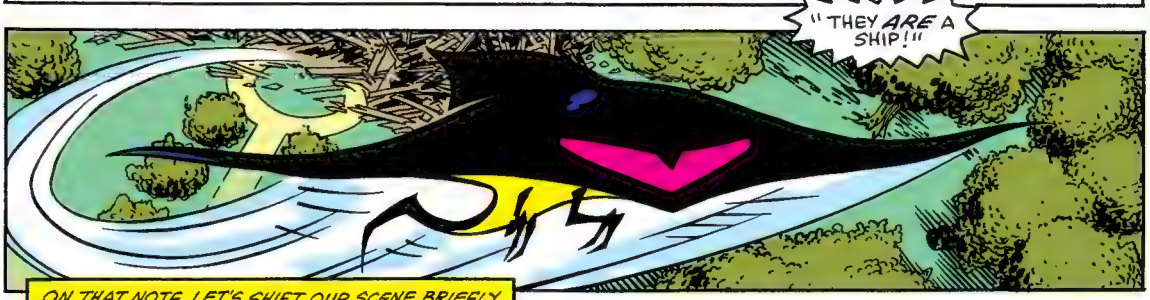

THE PHYSICAL COST TO HER IS SHATTERING...
...AS SHE USES HER ELEMENTAL POWERS TO CONJURE A MONSOON, CREATING A FLASH FLOOD IN THE NARROW TUNNEL WHICH SHE HURLS AT THE ALIENS...

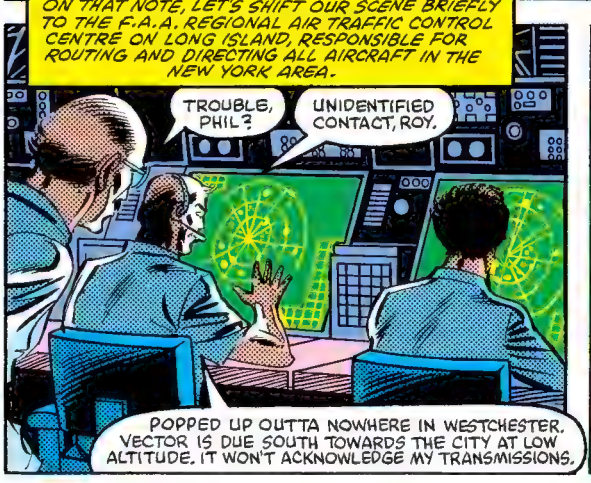
...YET SHE STILL FINDS STRENGTH ENOUGH TO STREAK DOWN THE TRANSIT TUNNEL TO THE HANGAR AT FULL SPEED.
THIS IS WHY BOTH SCOTT AND I KNEW I HAD TO STAY-- BECAUSE WHEREVER THE BLACKBIRD WENT, I COULD FOLLOW. ONCE SHE WAS AIRBORNE, SCOTT COULD NOT.

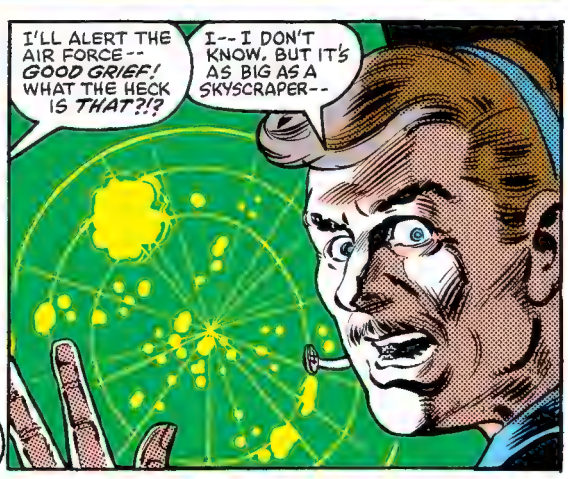

SECONDS LATER, THUNDER RIPPLES ACROSS THE TOWN OF SALEM CENTER-- SCARING EVERYONE AWAKENED BY THE CRASH OF CORSAIR'S STARSHIP--
--AS TWO ULTRA-HIGH-PERFORMANCE JET ENGINES PUNCH 77,000 KILOGRAMS OF SLEEK, EBONY AIR-CRAFT STRAIGHT UP INTO THE SKY.


ON-BOARD CAMERAS AND SENSORS OPERATIONAL-- TO GATHER AS MUCH DATA AS POSSIBLE FOR PROFESSOR X --THE PLANE MAKES A LOW PASS OVER THE MANSION.
MY LORD.
CHARLES LOVED THAT OLD HOUSE. I DID, TOO. IT WAS THE ONLY REAL HOME I REMEMBER. IT'LL BREAK HIS HEART TO SEE IT LIKE THIS.

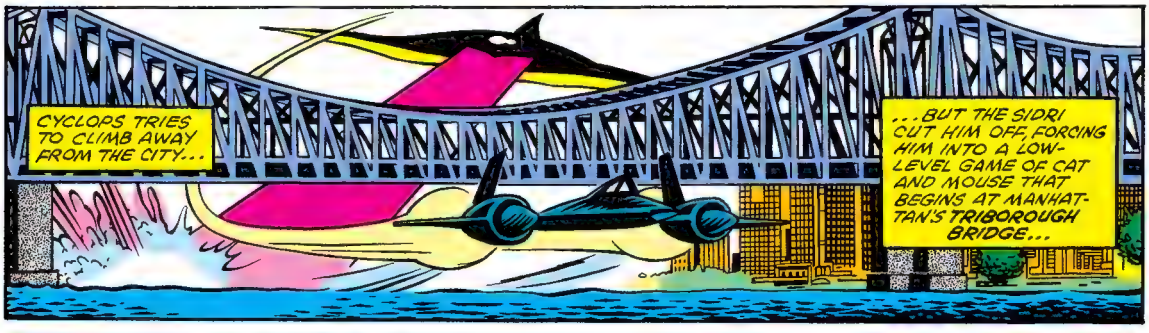

"KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED," HE TELLS THE OTHERS. "THEIR SHIP SHOULD BE SOMEWHERE NEARBY. MAYBE WE CAN PUT IT OUT OF COMMISSION."
"TAKE ANOTHER LOOK, LAD," CORSAIR REPLIES GRIMLY. "THE SIDRI DON'T NEED A SHIP.

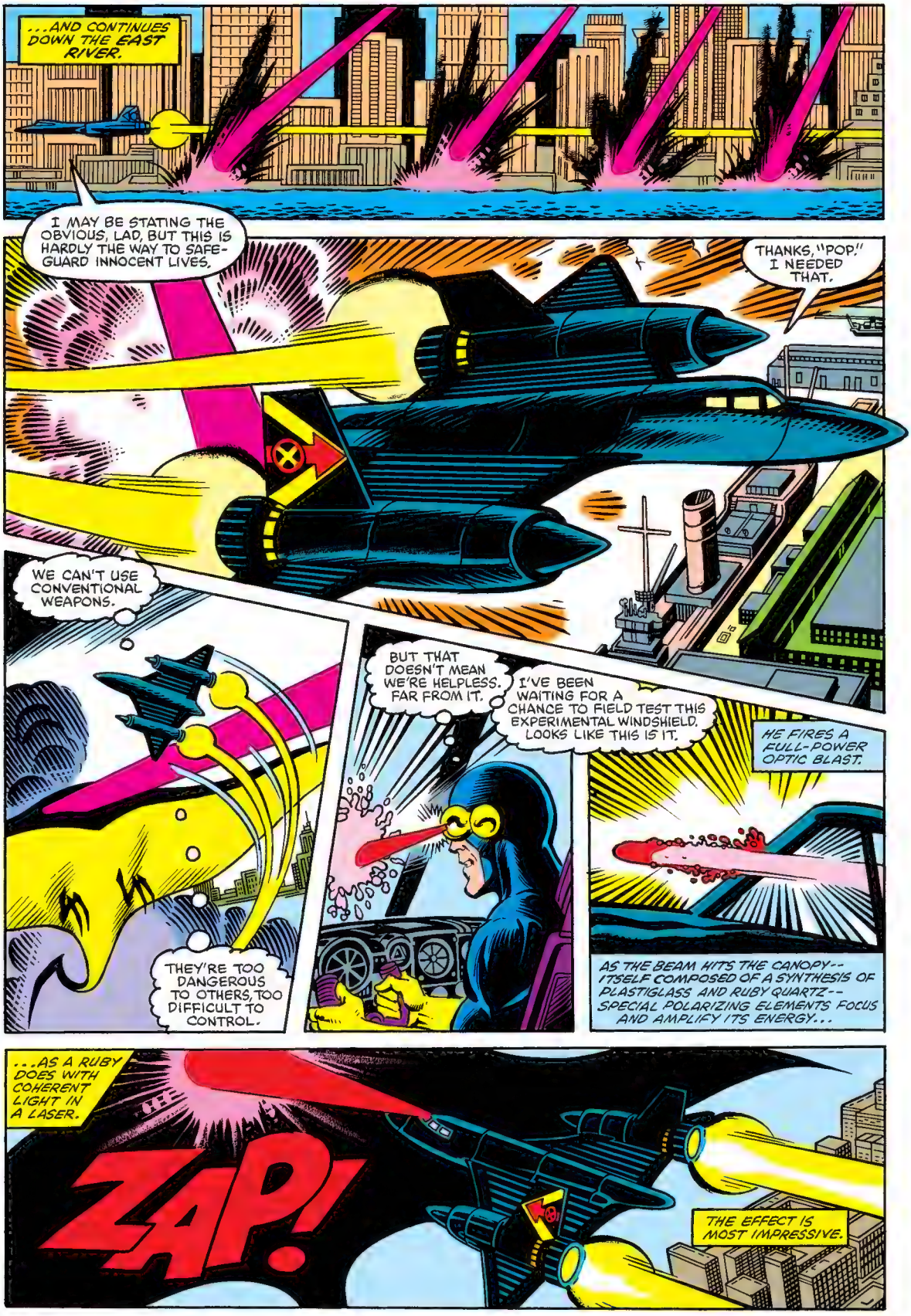

"THEY ARE A SHIP!"

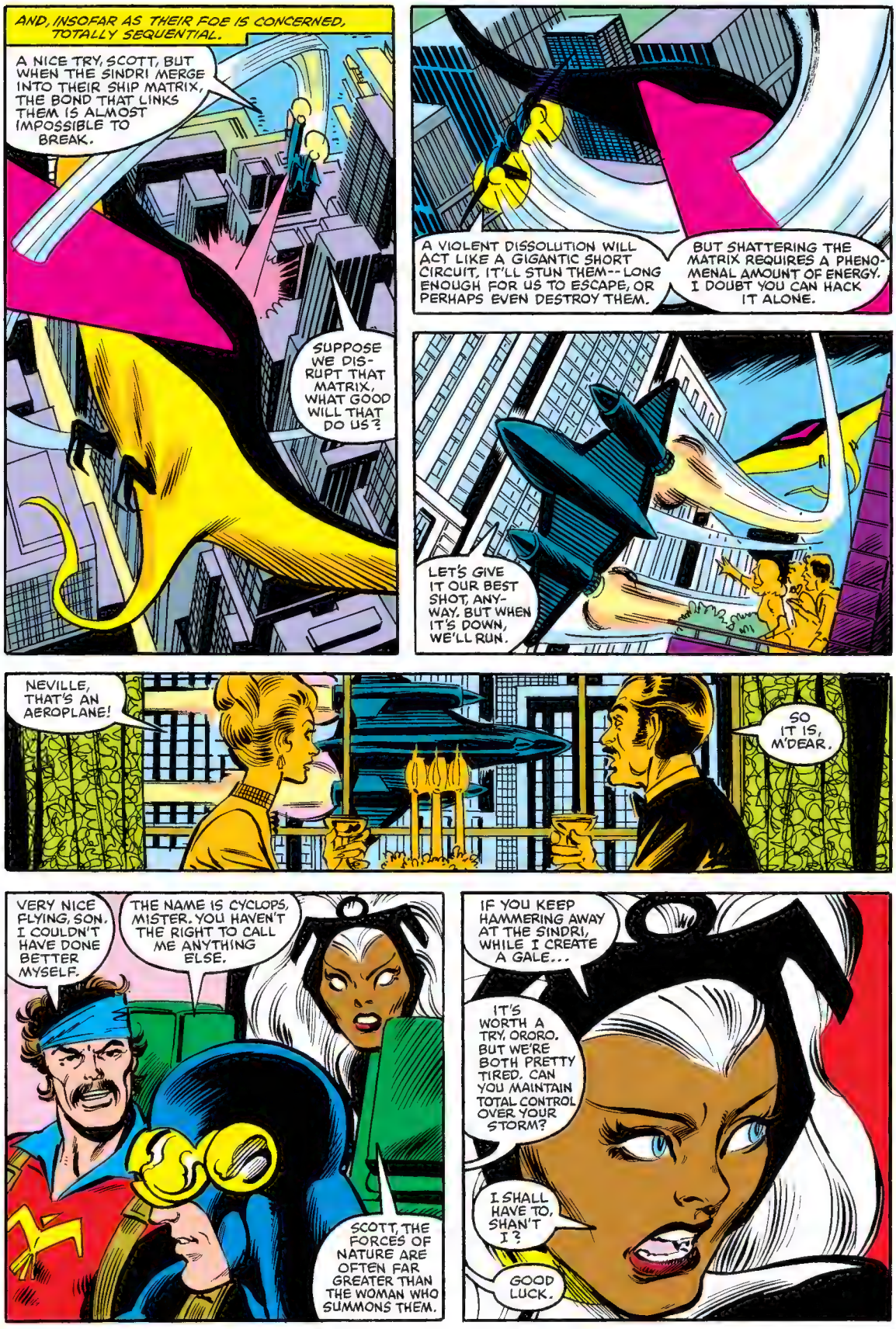

ON THAT NOTE, LET'S SHIFT OUR SCENE BRIEFLY TO THE F.A.A. REGIONAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTRE ON LONG ISLAND, RESPONSIBLE FOR ROUTING AND DIRECTING ALL AIRCRAFT IN THE NEW YORK AREA.
TROUBLE, PHIL?
UNIDENTIFIED CONTACT, ROY.
POPPED UP OUTTA NOWHERE IN WESTCHESTER. VECTOR IS DUE SOUTH TOWARDS THE CITY AT LOW ALTITUDE. IT WON'T ACKNOWLEDGE MY TRANSMISSIONS.


I'LL ALERT THE AIR FORCE -- GOOD GRIEF! WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?!?
I-- I DON'T KNOW. BUT IT'S AS BIG AS A SKYSCRAPER--

"--AND IT'S BARRELING FULL-TILT INTO THE MOST CROWDED AIR-SPACE ON EARTH!"
YOW!!

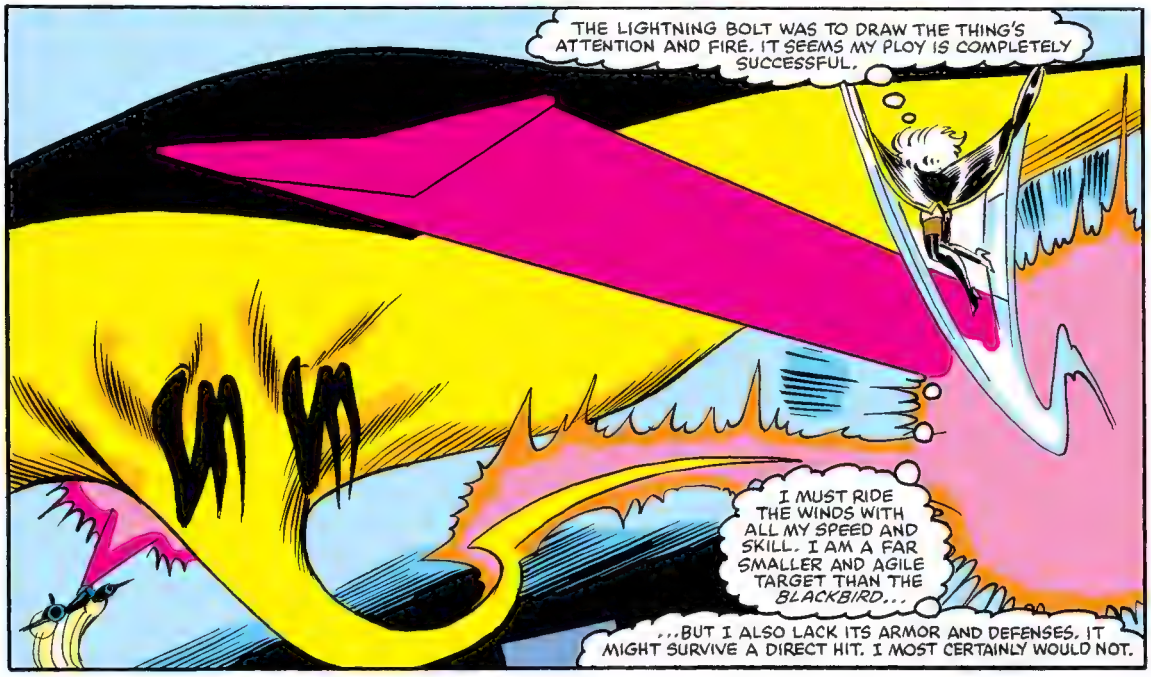

CYCLOPS TRIES TO CLIMB AWAY FROM THE CITY...
...BUT THE SIDRI CUT HIM OFF, FORCING HIM INTO A LOW-LEVEL GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE THAT BEGINS AT MANHATTAN'S TRIBOROUGH BRIDGE...

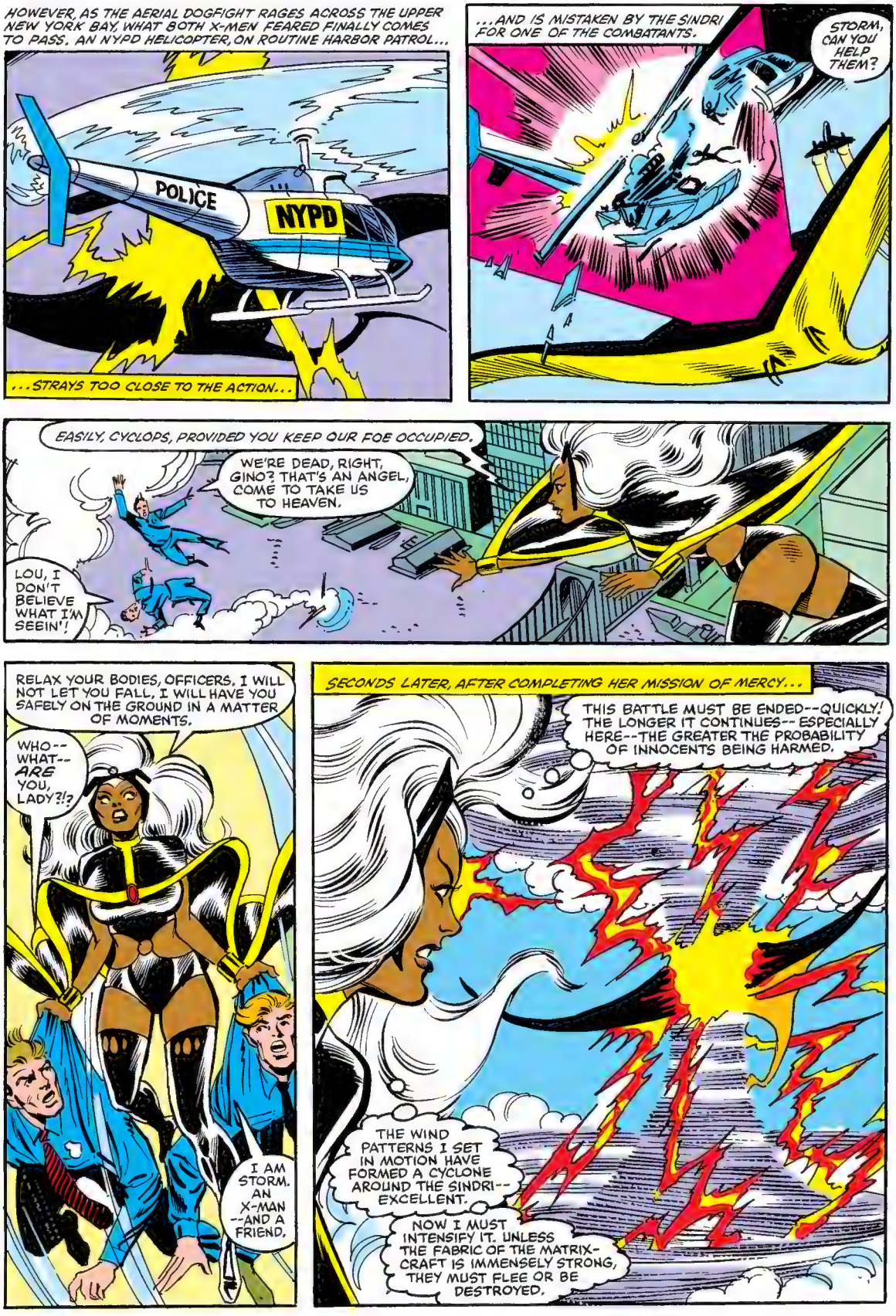

...AND CONTINUES DOWN THE EAST RIVER.
I MAY BE STATING THE OBVIOUS, LAD, BUT THIS IS HARDLY THE WAY TO SAFE-GUARD INNOCENT LIVES.
THANKS, "POP." I NEEDED THAT.
WE CAN'T USE CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS.
THEY'RE TOO DANGEROUS TO OTHERS, TOO DIFFICULT TO CONTROL.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE HELPLESS. FAR FROM IT.
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO FIELD TEST THIS EXPERIMENTAL WINDSHIELD. LOOKS LIKE THIS IS IT.
HE FIRES A FULL-POWER OPTIC BLAST.
AS THE BEAM HITS THE CANOPY--ITSELF COMPOSED OF A SYNTHESIS OF PLASTIGLASS AND RUBY QUARTZ--SPECIAL POLARIZING ELEMENTS FOCUS AND AMPLIFY ITS ENERGY...
...AS A RUBY DOES WITH COHERENT LIGHT IN A LASER.
ZAP!
THE EFFECT IS MOST IMPRESSIVE.

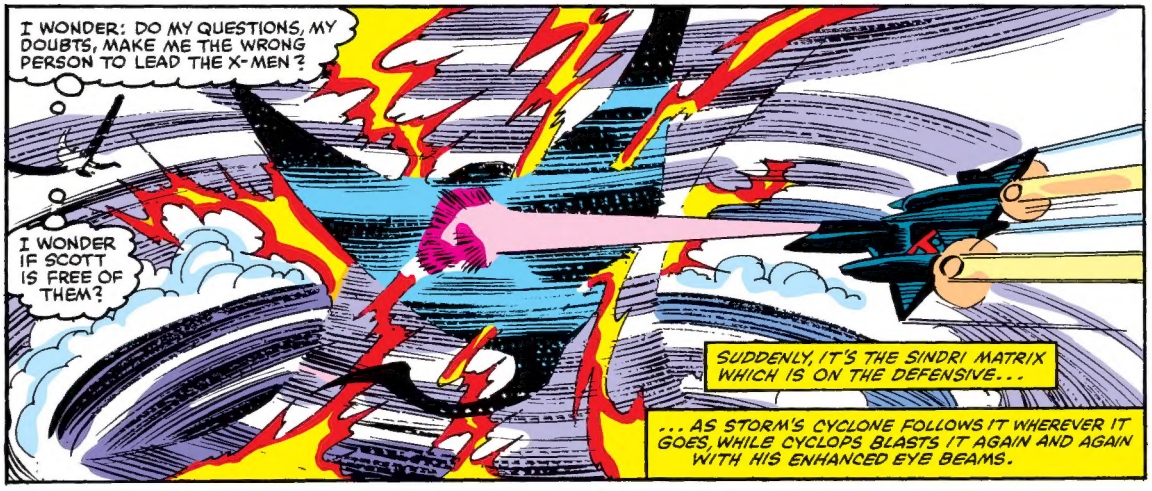

AND, INSOFAR AS THEIR FOE IS CONCERNED, TOTALLY SEQUENTIAL.
A NICE TRY, SCOTT, BUT WHEN THE SINDRI MERGE INTO THEIR SHIP MATRIX, THE BOND THAT LINKS THEM IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BREAK.
SUPPOSE WE DIS-RUPT THAT MATRIX, WHAT GOOD WILL THAT DO US?
A VIOLENT DISSOLUTION WILL ACT LIKE A GIGANTIC SHORT CIRCUIT. IT'LL STUN THEM--LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO ESCAPE, OR PERHAPS EVEN DESTROY THEM.
BUT SHATTERING THE MATRIX REQUIRES A PHENO-MENAL AMOUNT OF ENERGY. I DOUBT YOU CAN HACK IT ALONE.
LET'S GIVE IT OUR BEST SHOT, ANY-WAY. BUT WHEN IT'S DOWN, WE'LL RUN.
NEVILLE, THAT'S AN AEROPLANE!
SO IT IS, M'DEAR.
VERY NICE FLYING, SON. I COULDN'T HAVE DONE BETTER MYSELF.
THE NAME IS CYCLOPS, MISTER. YOU HAVEN'T THE RIGHT TO CALL ME ANYTHING ELSE.
SCOTT, THE FORCES OF NATURE ARE OFTEN FAR GREATER THAN THE WOMAN WHO SUMMONS THEM.
IF YOU KEEP HAMMERING AWAY AT THE SINDRI, WHILE I CREATE A GALE...
IT'S WORTH A TRY, ORORO. BUT WE'RE BOTH PRETTY TIRED. CAN YOU MAINTAIN TOTAL CONTROL OVER YOUR STORM?
I SHALL HAVE TO, SHAN'T I?
GOOD LUCK.

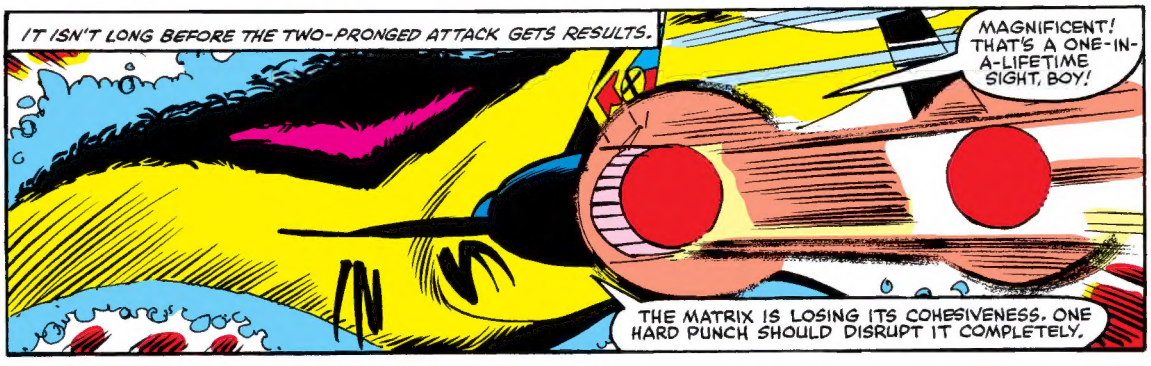
TO DO WHAT IS NECESSARY, I MUST WARP WEATHER PATTERNS THROUGHOUT THE NEW YORK METROPLEX. THE EFFECTS OF SUCH AN ATMOSPHERIC TRAUMA WILL BE FELT FOR DAYS, PERHAPS LONGER. AND THEY MAY BE SEVERE.
YET IF I DO NOTHING, WE THREE ARE SURELY DOOMED.
ARE OUR LIVES WORTH ENDANGERING THE CITY?

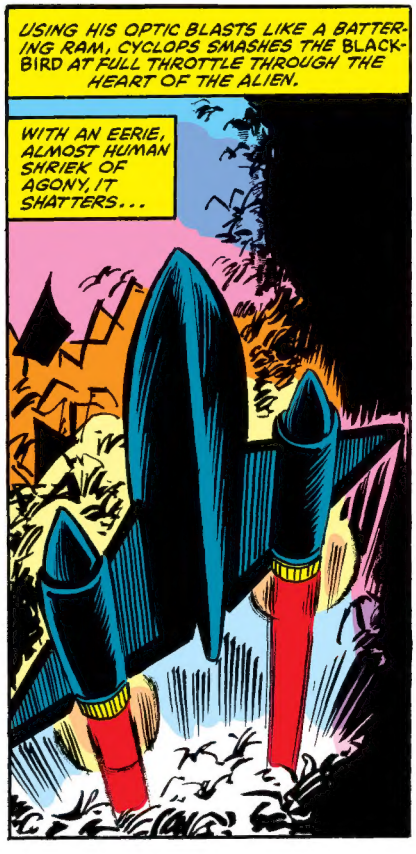
AND IF THE ANSWER IS "YES," ARE WE NOT THEN IN DANGER OF FOLLOWING THE SAME ARROGANT PATH THAT *MAGNETO* TROD?
SO OFTEN, IT SEEMS WE MUST CHOOSE-- NOT BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD BUT BETWEEN THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS.

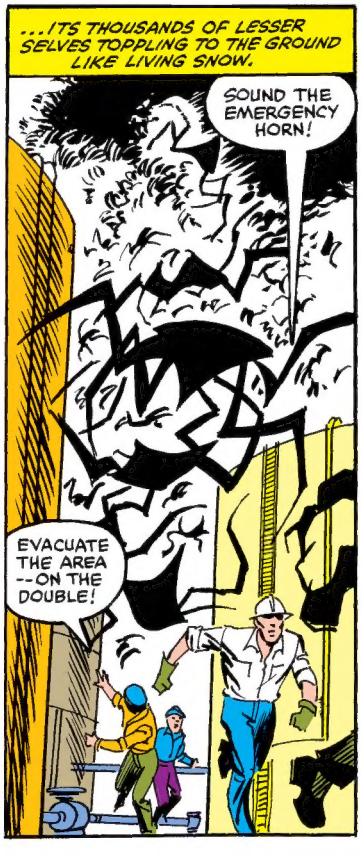

THE LIGHTNING BOLT WAS TO DRAW THE THING'S ATTENTION AND FIRE. IT SEEMS MY PLOY IS COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL.
I MUST RIDE THE WINDS WITH ALL MY SPEED AND SKILL. I AM A FAR SMALLER AND AGILE TARGET THAN THE *BLACKBIRD*...
...BUT I ALSO LACK ITS ARMOR AND DEFENSES. IT MIGHT SURVIVE A DIRECT HIT. I MOST CERTAINLY WOULD NOT.

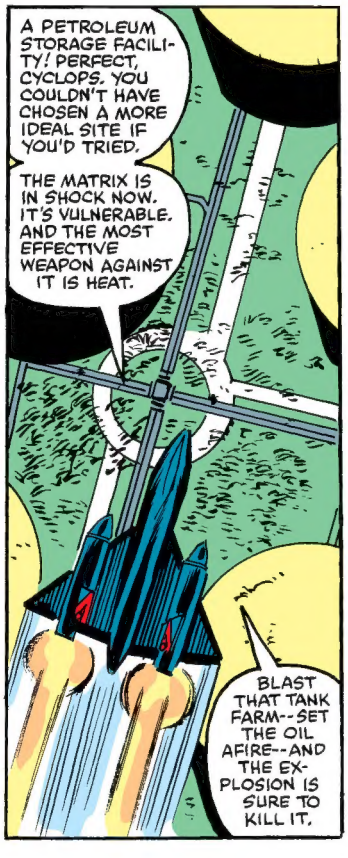

HOWEVER, AS THE AERIAL DOGFIGHT RAGES ACROSS THE UPPER NEW YORK BAY, WHAT BOTH X-MEN FEARED FINALLY COMES TO PASS. AN NYPD HELICOPTER, ON ROUTINE HARBOR PATROL...
POLICE
NYPD
...STRAYS TOO CLOSE TO THE ACTION...
...AND IS MISTAKEN BY THE SINDRI FOR ONE OF THE COMBATANTS.
STORM, CAN YOU HELP THEM?
EASILY, CYCLOPS, PROVIDED YOU KEEP OUR FOE OCCUPIED.
WE'RE DEAD, RIGHT, GINO? THAT'S AN ANGEL, COME TO TAKE US TO HEAVEN.
LOU, I DON'T BELIEVE WHAT I'M SEEIN'!
RELAX YOUR BODIES, OFFICERS. I WILL NOT LET YOU FALL. I WILL HAVE YOU SAFELY ON THE GROUND IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS.
WHO--WHAT--ARE YOU, LADY?!?
I AM STORM. AN X-MAN --AND A FRIEND.
SECONDS LATER, AFTER COMPLETING HER MISSION OF MERCY...
THIS BATTLE MUST BE ENDED--QUICKLY! THE LONGER IT CONTINUES-- ESPECIALLY HERE--THE GREATER THE PROBABILITY OF INNOCENTS BEING HARMED.
THE WIND PATTERNS I SET IN MOTION HAVE FORMED A CYCLONE AROUND THE SINDRI-- EXCELLENT.
NOW I MUST INTENSIFY IT. UNLESS THE FABRIC OF THE MATRIX-CRAFT IS IMMENSELY STRONG, THEY MUST FLEE OR BE DESTROYED.


I WONDER: DO MY QUESTIONS, MY DOUBTS, MAKE ME THE WRONG PERSON TO LEAD THE X-MEN?
I WONDER IF SCOTT IS FREE OF THEM?
SUDDENLY, IT'S THE SINDRI MATRIX WHICH IS ON THE DEFENSIVE...
...AS STORM'S CYCLONE FOLLOWS IT WHEREVER IT GOES, WHILE CYCLOPS BLASTS IT AGAIN AND AGAIN WITH HIS ENHANCED EYE BEAMS.

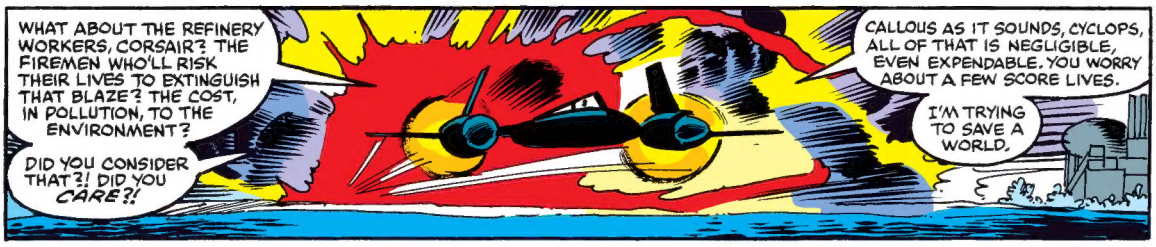

IT ISN'T LONG BEFORE THE TWO-PRONGED ATTACK GETS RESULTS.
MAGNIFICENT! THAT'S A ONE-IN-A-LIFETIME SIGHT, BOY!
THE MATRIX IS LOSING ITS COHESIVENESS. ONE HARD PUNCH SHOULD DISRUPT IT COMPLETELY.

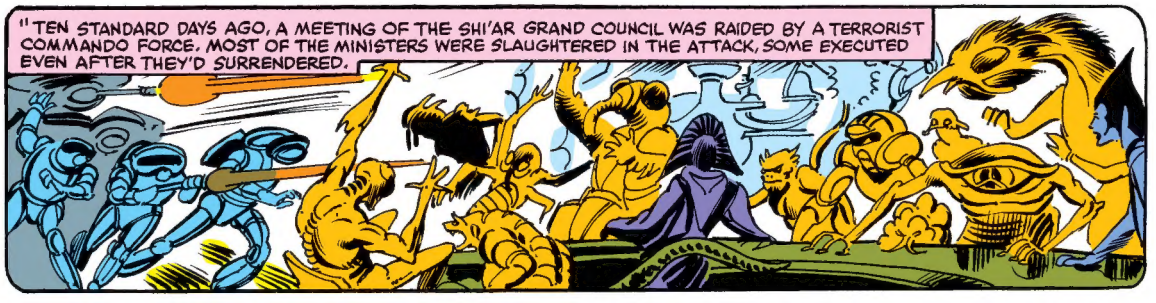

USING HIS OPTIC BLASTS LIKE A BATTERING RAM, CYCLOPS SMASHES THE BLACKBIRD AT FULL THROTTLE THROUGH THE HEART OF THE ALIEN.
WITH AN EERIE, ALMOST HUMAN SHRIEK OF AGONY, IT SHATTERS...

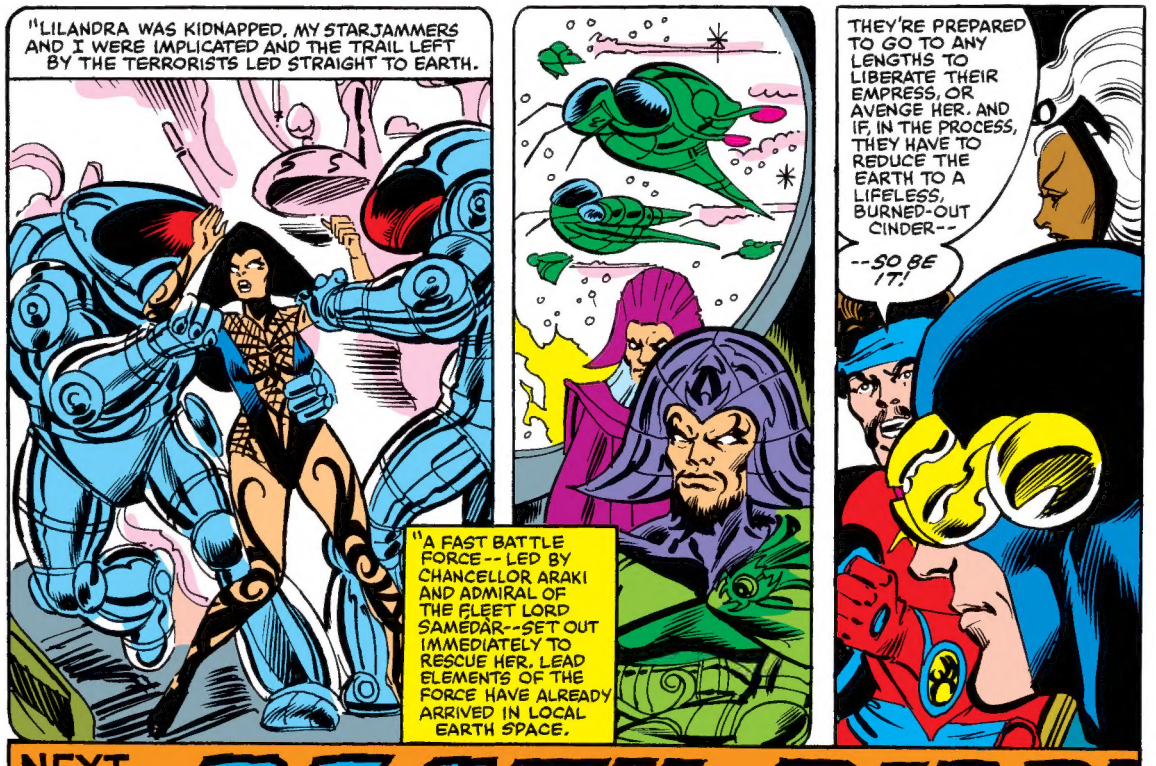

...ITS THOUSANDS OF LESSER SELVES TOPPLING TO THE GROUND LIKE LIVING SNOW.
SOUND THE EMERGENCY HORN!
EVACUATE THE AREA --ON THE DOUBLE!


A PETROLEUM STORAGE FACILITY! PERFECT, CYCLOPS. YOU COULDN'T HAVE CHOSEN A MORE IDEAL SITE IF YOU'D TRIED.
THE MATRIX IS IN SHOCK NOW. IT'S VULNERABLE. AND THE MOST EFFECTIVE WEAPON AGAINST IT IS HEAT.
BLAST THAT TANK FARM--SET THE OIL AFIRE--AND THE EXPLOSION IS SURE TO KILL IT.

"KILL IT?!" YOU MEAN, THAT THING'S ALIVE? I...I THOUGHT IT WAS A CONSTRUCT, A MECHANISM.
IT'S A COLONY CREATURE, LIVING AND SENTIENT. SO WHAT?
I CAN'T-- I WON'T-- KILL, CORSAIR.
THIS IS NO TIME FOR SCRUPLES, BOY. IT HAS NO COMPUNCTIONS ABOUT KILLING YOU-- OR ANYONE ELSE WHO GETS IN ITS WAY.
YOU SANCTIMONIOUS FOOL, WE CAN'T LET IT REINTEGRATE! WE'VE ONLY SECONDS TO ACT.
SECONDS BEFORE WHAT?
STORM, STOP HIM!
WHY? CORSAIR-- DON'T!
I'M SORRY, BUT I'VE NO ALTERNATIVE. I'VE FOUGHT THESE THINGS, YOU HAVEN'T. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY, BELIEVE ME.
NOW, WE CAN GO.
WHAROOM!







NEXT ISSUE: **DEATH-BIRD!**

MINUTEMEN

Sy13nt
Bob